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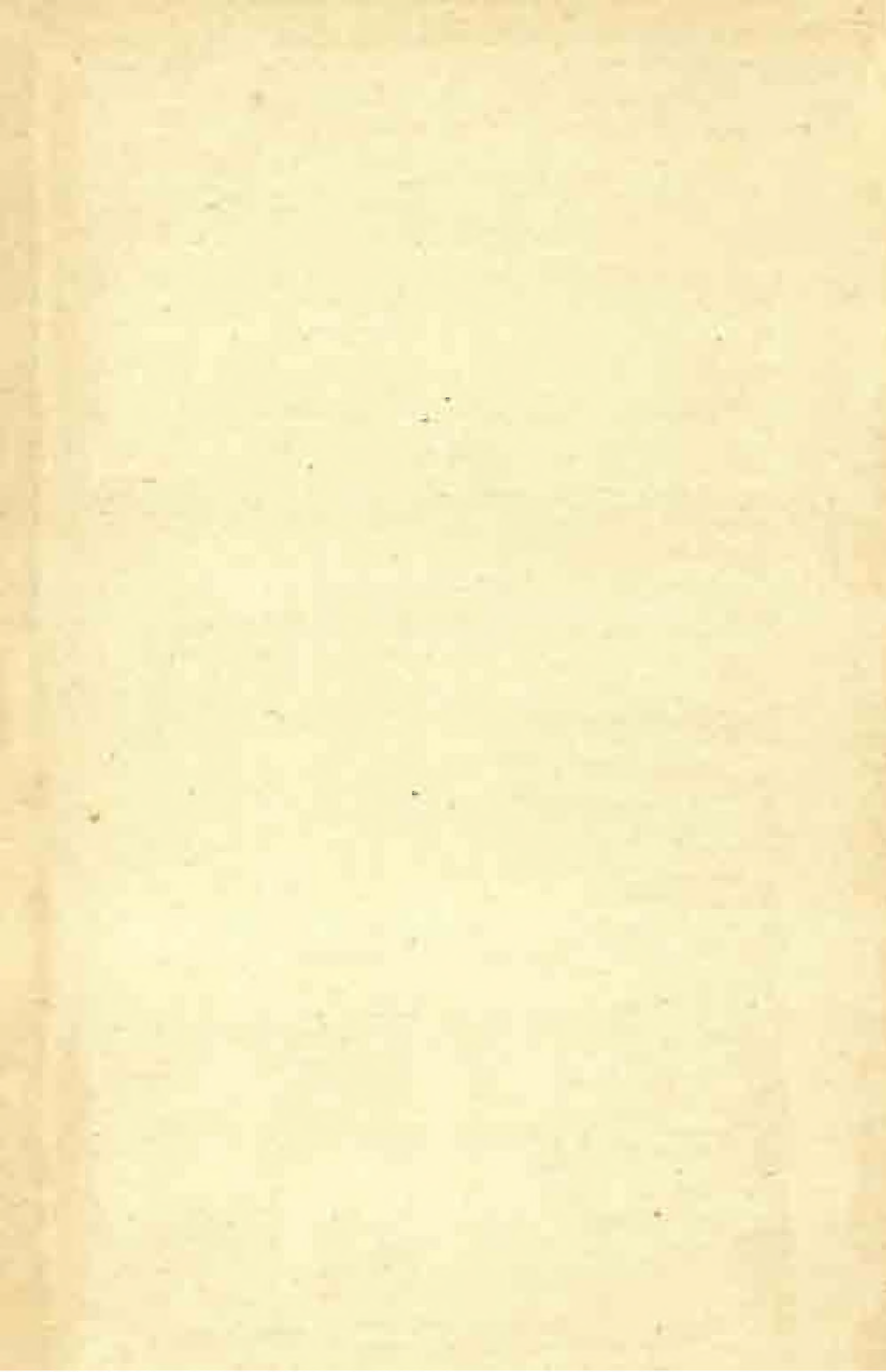
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MODERN INDIA  
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# MODERN INDIA AND THE WEST

A STUDY OF THE INTERACTION  
OF THEIR CIVILIZATIONS

*Edited by*

L. S. S. O'MALLEY, C.I.E.

*With a foreword by*

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## FOREWORD

HOW far the impact of one great civilization upon another has advanced or retarded the progress of mankind must usually be a matter for the historian to assess in after-centuries, when much of the evidence for his verdict has been destroyed. Rarely can it be given to him to watch the process actually at work and to weigh its value against facts abundant, patent, and uncontroverted. To-day he has that opportunity. He can study the pressure of the restless, sceptical civilization of the West upon the static, contemplative civilization of the East. To that study this volume is devoted. The particular case of India has been chosen, not only because we have special knowledge of it, but also because India has reached a point at which she may soon have to decide for herself how far the impact of western civilization is to carry her.

In a sense the metaphor of an impact is inappropriate to India. There has been nothing, or very little, of a clash between her own ancient culture and the alien culture imported from the West; no violent conflict of ideas or of methods; no forcible replacement of one social system by another. The more fitting metaphor would be that of a stream of new thought and practice flowing into the sea of India's traditions and life. We can trace, for a time at least, the distinctive colour of the river water spreading out over the surface of the sea; but, as we often have cause to reflect in India, how little can we tell of its influence in the ocean depths beneath. The movement of western civilization into India has been slow and peaceful penetration.

It must always be a matter of difficulty to distinguish between the changes imposed, with however benevolent an intention, by an alien government upon a subject people, and the free acceptance by the people of the standards which the alien government has brought with it. In the matter of law and justice, for example, there are certain tenets of British jurisprudence, certain offences in the penal code, to which Indian opinion is not yet wholly reconciled; but the great bulk of both the civil and the criminal law which the British government has enacted commands the general intellectual assent of the people, the more so as their indigenous family law has been respected and preserved. In many of the regions of art and literature India has paid western culture the compliment of imitation; the poetry of Toru Dutt and Mrs. Naidu will at once occur to mind as brilliant examples. Music, however, remains a striking exception; to the Indian ear European music has as little attraction as Indian music, with its 'melody untouched by harmony' and its subtle cross-rhythm and quarter-

tones, has for the ordinary European. But, when we come to the so-called 'nation-building' services, and especially education, India has hastened to meet them with zealous approval in theory, and increasingly also in practice. On the whole it may be said with confidence that, if European civilization has met with resistance at times and in some of its phases, its general *ethos* has been accepted with warmth, and when hostility is shown to its practices, the declared reason is usually that they fall so far short of its precepts.

Of all the channels through which western influences flow into Indian life, education is the chief. On no Indian topic has controversy raged so long and acutely as on the policy of the British government in replacing the old indigenous systems of teaching by definitely western methods, and particularly in giving the English language prominence at the secondary stage and dominance at the university stage as the medium of instruction. Upon the wisdom or unwisdom of this policy time alone can return the verdict; but the facts to-day are clear. On the one hand the policy has checked the spontaneous processes of the intellectual genius of the people. So far, it is true, as scientific development is concerned, this criticism would hardly apply, if only because no scientific vocabulary exists in any of the Indian vernaculars. But in other realms of thought—literature, history, philosophy—the teaching of English has deflected the Indian mind from the traditional lines of culture which an advanced vernacular education might have encouraged.

That is one side of the shield. The other is that the widespread knowledge of the English language and use of English text-books has drawn the Indian mind into an entirely new line of development. Along that line lie utterly novel conceptions: freedom of speech and the pen, criticism of authority, the questioning of accepted dogmas, the insistence on the rights of man as opposed to his duties. The growing familiarity with these has brought a new spirit into Indian life, the stirrings of scepticism instead of a stagnant authoritarianism, a glimmering if not the forerunner of what we in Europe call democracy.

Here emerges the crucial problem of the two civilizations. All the western doctrines of freedom and progress are eagerly embraced by the great majority of Indians who have made English their common language; but how will this new current in the end affect the unfathomed depths of Hindu and Muslim life? Will there be a blend? or will the East slowly assimilate and absorb what comes from the West? or will the western tincture spread and produce, as it were, a chemical transformation? Although the reformers to-day are a small proportion of the Indian people, they



are vigorous, they have leaders of marked ability, and they hold the monopoly of swaying the masses and creating public opinion. As the present system of education broadens out, so will their power, unless and until, as so often in history, a counter-reformation boils up and checks it. This again is a contingency on which prophecy would be vain; but the influences unfriendly to democratic reforms are far from negligible. They are rooted in philosophies and antipathies which are sketched in Chapters IX and XI of this work with a reticence that does not conceal their durable hold upon the minds of the multitude.

When, if ever, this conflict arises, it will set its seal upon the value or otherwise of what the West has brought to India. The momentous political changes which are now taking place may bring it nearer. On the other hand, if the new political powers which the Indian reformer is acquiring are used with wisdom and tolerance, the conflict may never come. This then, it would seem, is the searching test that may in the near future be applied to the work of western civilization in the East. Has it, by its teaching and its example, given India the will and the power to use unfamiliar political institutions for the creation of a civic sense, the promotion of national unity, and the greater happiness of the people? If it has done this, we may safely anticipate that the verdict of history will be favourable.

Although reflections on political issues naturally present themselves, especially at the present juncture, to the mind of the reader, he will find no polemic in these chapters. They were planned in the determination to present a thoroughly objective study of the subject; and not the least of the editor's successes is the firmness with which this attitude has been maintained amid the enthusiasms that might easily have been displayed. The design of the book was to secure for each of the most prominent phases of civilized life an author with special knowledge of its manifestations in India. There have been some disappointments, inevitable at a time like the present. There are a few omissions; the chapter on Indian literature, for example, has been confined to six of the leading vernaculars in view of the difficulty of choice if the field had been widened. Taken as a whole, however, the symposium is authoritative and comprehensive; and the co-operation of British and Indian writers has been particularly happy. For various causes a quite disproportionate share of the research and writing has fallen on the editor; and it would not be easy to estimate too highly Mr. O'Malley's work, both in guiding his contributors and in the long and valuable chapters which he has himself provided; his two opening chapters and his final chapter form a masterly *aperçu* of the whole Indian situation.

The objects of this study have been already mentioned. There is yet another; more than fifty years ago Dr. Jowett said:

'Englishmen cannot govern a people without understanding it, and the understanding of it must be gained through a knowledge of its languages, its literature, its institutions, its customs, its poetry and mythology, its land and agriculture.'

Since then change has been busy; but the necessity for our understanding India remains; to-day indeed it is probably greater than ever before; and if this book does something to further the mutual comprehension of India and England, it will serve one of the main purposes of Chatham House, under whose aegis it is published.

MESTON

*While this book was in the press, Mr. O'Malley passed away, after a wearing illness. He had given his best to it through much ill health, and it will always be a regret to his many friends that he did not live to see it complete.*

M.



## PREFACE

THE object of this work is to give a synopsis of the nature, extent, and effects of the influence which western civilization has had upon the life and thought of India since the beginning of the sixteenth century, to show what have been the reactions of different classes at different times and how they have been expressed in word and deed, and to trace the far smaller influence which India has had upon the West. It is a co-operative survey, to which a number of writers have contributed. The work has been conducted under the direction of a special committee of the Royal Institute of International Affairs and under the immediate supervision of a sub-committee, but the opinions expressed are those of the writers themselves.

In the survey of India which he gave in *India in 1880*, Sir Richard Temple drew attention to the changes which had already been effected by the plastic touch of western civilization. The face of the country and its economic organization were undergoing modification; the religious ideas, the moral sentiments, the social habits of many classes of the people were changing fast. So too Lord Ripon observed in 1882 that no one who watched the signs of the times in India with even moderate care could doubt that it had entered upon a period of change. The spread of education, the influence of a free Press, the substitution of legal for discretionary administration, the progress of railways, telegraphs, &c., the easier communication with Europe, and the more ready influx of European ideas were beginning to produce a marked effect. New ideas were springing up; new aspirations were being called forth. A movement, he said, had begun which would advance with greater rapidity and force every year. Since then the rapid advance of western civilization has brought new forces to bear on the country, and India has been subject to the levelling ideas of a modern democratic nation. During the present century the number and significance of the changes which have taken place are perhaps greater than in any previous generation. To many it seems that India has been taken in tow by the West and is going fast ahead in its wake, and there is a tendency to overlook or minimize the constants which persist in spite of change. On the other hand there are others who are impressed by the strong reactions against western influences and are inclined to argue *plus ça change*,



*plus c'est la même chose.* There are still many, especially those of an older generation, with whom the idea of the unchanging East is almost an article of faith. Every endeavour has been made to keep an even balance between the two views and to give a just estimate of the evolution which has taken place and of the forces which have prevented it going further.

L. S. S. O'M.

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<sup>1</sup> It is with great regret that we record the death of Sir Benjamin Lindsay during the progress of the work.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

THE statement that India is not one country, but many countries, containing not one people but many peoples, has been repeated so often that it has become somewhat trite. The corollary is sometimes added that India does not possess and never has possessed any kind of unity. The former statement may be accepted as a general proposition. To the latter exception must be taken because, whatever other elements of unity may be lacking, India is united by a common culture, which for many centuries has been characterized by remarkable continuity. What Isocrates said of Greece might be said of India, viz. that it is the name of a culture, not of a race. At an early age it evolved a distinctive civilization, which takes its place among the great civilizations of the world. There was a certain amount of intercourse with Europe and other parts of Asia, but though there were exchange of trade and some interchange of ideas, India was singularly self-insulated in regard to its life and thought. There are some traces of foreign influence; the court of the Mauryas was affected by contacts with Persia or Iran; Greek influence has been discerned in early works on medicine and astronomy; Greek dynasties were established in the Punjab and the impress of Hellenistic style is obvious in the Gandhara sculptures. Gandhara was an outpost of Hellenism, Greeks studied in the university at Taxila, and there were Indians who read Greek literature and spoke Greek. But, generally speaking, it may be said that the religious and social systems, the literature and art, of Hinduism were—to use a popular neologism—the product of an 'ideology' which owed very little to outside contributions. It is this self-determined civilization which has made India what English writers have called a cosmos in itself and French writers *un monde particulier*, and it is owing to it that there is a fundamental community of thought and ideals in spite of extreme diversity of usage due to racial and linguistic differences. Hinduism, in fact, produced a certain unity between men who had no common language and who were socially atomized and politically divided, but who had common sympathies founded on the same religion, social institutions, and, to some extent, intellectual appetencies.

Although different cultural regions may be distinguished, Indian culture had an essential unity which was largely a result of continuity of land surface. India is both a geographical and cultural continuum. Neither mountains nor rivers interposed insuperable



barriers to the movement of peoples and of ideas. Unchecked by difficulties of terrain, Hinduism spread over the whole sub-continent and produced a general uniformity of culture where there was no uniformity of race. In the south it was super-imposed on or coalesced with the pre-existing Dravidian civilization, and a people which had a culture of its own, but was classed by early Sanskrit writers with barbarians, monkeys, and demons, was absorbed. Only a small section of the population remained outside its pervading influence. Some of the aboriginal or semi-aboriginal races continued to lead a tribal life and preserved animistic beliefs in the hills and forests to which they retired, but the majority were received into the fold of Hinduism, which adapted their cults and assimilated them, without destroying its own essentials. This process has continued in operation down to the present day, Hinduism gradually and steadily spreading among hill and forest tribes but still leaving a residuum, which remains outside the real civilization of India.

The most distinctive feature of Hindu culture was the religious element by which it was suffused. Religion was interwoven with the Hindu system of law. The books in which it was incorporated were regarded as divinely inspired; its ordinances were sacred rather than secular; obedience to them was not merely a social duty but a religious obligation. Religion and literature were so closely associated that the greater part of the works composed in the different Indian languages are devotional in character, except perhaps in South India, where secular literature developed side by side with religious poetry, and they can be classified according to the deities which are the objects of devotion, such as Rama, Krishna, Siva, and Durga. Art again, which reflects the aesthetic sensibility of a people, was intimately connected with religion, architecture finding expression in temples, and sculpture in the carvings, instinct with religious symbolism, which adorned them. Another characteristic is what has been called mystical intuitionism, of which an Indian writer says:

"The dominant fact in the consciousness of Europe is the will to act, in that of India the will to know; and the peculiar emphasis of each has profoundly influenced the growth of their civilizations. Religion, philosophy, art, custom and institutions all bear the same mark, and all reiterate in their different languages that fundamental concept of reality which forms the stuff of Hindu consciousness."<sup>1</sup>

The social bases of civilization were the joint family, the village community, and the caste system, the last of which was regarded as being divinely ordered and was supported by religious sanctions.

<sup>1</sup> Tara Chand, *Influence of Indian Islam on Indian Culture* (Allahabad, 1936), p. 234.



These institutions constituted an ordered social system which persisted in spite of recurring invasions from without and constant revolution within. The East has often been described as unchanging, but the history of India at any rate has been one of political change, empires rising and falling, dynasties springing up in quick succession and being as quickly swept away. The instability of thrones has, however, been offset by the stability of social conditions. Social life lay for the most part outside the sphere of State activities. It was subject to little political control and was scarcely affected by political revolutions.

Its salient feature was an authoritarian régime exercised by different groups, which maintained control over individual action and enforced collective responsibility and conformity to collective standards. Society was regulated not by the free play of competitive force but by status, tending to continuity rather than to development. In one way the stability of the social system made for strength, but on the other hand it was a source of national weakness, as the people acquired and retained the habit of thinking in terms of the group, whether the family, the village, or the caste, and not of the whole community. The relations of the individual with the group of which he was a member were the primary consideration, to which his relations with the State or nation were subordinated, and loyalty to the group hindered the formation of a national spirit.

The joint family was the constituent atom of the social order and the centre of jural relations. It was a collectivist institution, based on the possession of a common property by males descended from a common ancestor in the male line. Land and other property were owned by the family as a whole and devoted to the benefit of the family as a whole. A survival of an early stage of society in which social ties depended on consanguinity in the male line, it was so far modified by Hinduism as to allow men without male issue to adopt sons and so create an artificial relationship. Here again the religious element intrudes, for adoption is not merely a civil act. Its object is spiritual, viz. in order that the adopted son may perform the ceremonial rites essential for the salvation of the spirits of his adoptive father and the latter's ancestors.

The village community, again, which was naturally the predominant form of association among a people subsisting mainly by agriculture, was a group not of individuals but of families. It resembled the family in some cases by descent from a common ancestor and collective ownership of land, in others by subordination to a headman, who in communal matters had a position corresponding to that which the head of a family had in matters of common family concern. In all cases the villages had an organiza-

tion designed to make them self-supporting and self-governing. Their autonomy was part of a loosely organized system of government, in which the sovereign power left communal and local institutions to function independently, each in its limited sphere. Each village co-ordinated the social activities of its inhabitants and was an independent unit, the corporate spirit rarely extending farther than its boundaries. Small homogeneous units seem to have been congenial to the Indian temperament, and the village communities showed no tendency to coalesce in larger bodies except in South India, where unions of villages formed an administrative unit under the Chola kings (A.D. 800-1300). The villagers regulated their communal affairs by representative bodies called *panchayats*; they maintained order among themselves; they combined to protect themselves against attack, to launch attacks on any other village which encroached on their land, and to offer united resistance to unjust demands from the representatives of government. The latter left them alone except for the suppression of disorder and the collection of the revenue, or land-tax, in return for which they were entitled to protection against external enemies. Military service was not expected from them, nor did they volunteer for it. Fighting was the function of military castes or professional mercenaries, not of cultivators. Temperamentally pacific, they took no part in civil wars or political revolutions. They were described by the Duke of Wellington as being the only real political philosophers because they did not care who their governors might be. Certainly the question of who was to govern them was a matter of little interest compared with the question of how they were governed, and of how much revenue was levied from them, which was a matter of vital concern. As was remarked by Sir Thomas Munro, the people took no interest in political revolutions and considered defeat or victory as no concern of theirs but merely as the good or bad fortune of their masters, and they preferred one to another in so far as he taxed them lightly and respected their religion and their customs.<sup>1</sup>

The caste resembled the village in being a self-governing community and differed from it in having no definite or narrow territorial limits. The fundamental feature of the system was a hierarchical order culminating in the Brahman, who had a divinity greater than that which hedges a king. It had a theocratic foundation and religious sanctions based on the belief that it was a divinely ordained institution; it is probable that it would never have attained such strength and retained such vitality had it not been for the religious belief and sanctions on which it rested. It

<sup>1</sup> G. R. Gleig, *The Life of Major-General Sir Thomas Munro* (1830), vol. I, p. 203.



involved specialization of functions, many different castes having specific hereditary occupations. It embodied principles of separatism, the ban on intermarriage being a bar to the fusion of different classes in a homogeneous community. On the other hand, it constituted a bond of union among the members of each individual caste, which set up its own standards of life and conduct, and had effectual means of enforcing the fulfilment of its canons. In one way a caste was a democratic institution as its laws and regulations were the expression of the common will, to which all had to yield obedience. On the other hand, the system was the negation of democratic principles, its cardinal principle being a belief in the inherent and divinely ordained inequality of man.

Hindu civilization maintained its vitality under Muslim rule, and India never became a Muslim country. It was and still is, in the words of Meredith Townsend, a Hindu country in which Muslims are numerous,<sup>1</sup> though there are territories, e.g. the North-West Frontier Province, the Punjab, and Bengal, where they predominate. There were mass conversions, but the country was too vast, the invaders too few, and the volume of immigration too small to change the social complex. The Muslims were not so much colonists as rulers, administrators, and merchants. They preferred living in cities and towns to settling down in villages, and they depended on Hindus for much of their labour and clerical work. In the first half of the seventeenth century it was noticed that practically all the industrial workers were Hindus, the Muslims practising scarcely any handicrafts except weaving and dyeing, while the subordinate operations of trade were carried on by the agency of Hindus, who were responsible for all the book-keeping, buying, selling, and general business of brokerage on behalf of the Muslim merchants who employed them.<sup>2</sup> Later the Hindus seem to have improved their position, holding the power of the purse as financiers, bankers, merchants, and traders. Bernier, indeed, asserted that they possessed almost exclusively the trade and wealth of the country.<sup>3</sup>

The Muslims moreover never completed the territorial conquest of India. The greater part of Assam was not subdued, though there were occasional invasions. So little was known of it that a Muslim historian, describing an invasion in the latter part of the seventeenth century, said that it was a wild and dreadful country whose inhabitants resembled men only in being able to walk erect on two feet. Also, the Muslims did not bring the whole of their conquests under their direct rule. There were principalities in

<sup>1</sup> *Asia and Europe* (1905), p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> W. H. Moreland, *Jahangir's India* (1925), pp. 77-8.

<sup>3</sup> *Travels in the Mogul Empire* (1891), p. 225.

which Hindu rulers discharged governmental functions under a varying measure of control; Hindu princes and nobles continued to administer territories and estates not in entire independence but on condition that they supplied levies of troops and were responsible for the payment either of tribute or land revenue. South India remained outside the sphere of Muslim dominion for some centuries after it was established in North India. Orissa was under Hindu sovereignty, and the kings of Vijayanagar kept the Muslim forces at bay, until the second half of the sixteenth century. Even after the overthrow of these kings Hindu principalities continued in existence, and the advance of the Muslim power was checked by the Marathas. Madura was under Hindu government until 1736, Mysore till 1761, and Tanjore till 1799. In consequence the country south of the Tungabhadra river was, and still is, the most purely Hindu portion of all India.<sup>1</sup>

Conversions took place on a large scale in North India, where some changed their religion in order to save their lives or their lands, some in order to escape the poll tax levied from Hindus, others, mostly members of the low castes, in order to better their social condition by admission into the brotherhood of Islam, while others were converted by itinerant preachers, who convinced them of the truth of the Islamic faith. A certain number were captives of war, who were enslaved and forced to accept the creed of their conquerors; but their descendants were not necessarily slaves, for a slave girl who was her master's concubine became unsaleable when she became a mother, and her children were as free as the children of a free woman. Conversions, however, were neither so extensive nor so thorough as those which took place in some other countries conquered by the armies of Islam. The Islamic faith was too austere, its theism too impersonal, for the generality of Hindus, and their social ties were too strong to be broken. The mass of the population remained Hindu, and though there was contact between the two communities, there was no fusion. Unlike other races which had entered India as conquerors but were gradually absorbed and assimilated, the Muslims remained a people apart, sundered from their neighbours by religious belief and social customs. Stern monotheists, the polytheism of popular Hinduism was anathema to them. They had neither a caste system nor a joint family system. It is, however, a familiar phenomenon that when a conquered race is held in subjection under a military form of government, its civilization has a reflex action on its conqueror, and the same thing happened in India, where the process was facilitated by the fact that many of the Indian Muslims were converts, who, while subscribing to the tenets of Islam, re-

<sup>1</sup> See *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (1909), vol. ii, p. 323.



tained many Hindu customs. The Muslims were in any case a minority and, as such, were inevitably influenced by their contact with the Hindu majority. Indian manners of life were adopted and class distinctions, resembling but much looser than those of caste, found a place in their social organization.

Hinduism, in self-defence against the intrusion of Islam, shrank into its shell, using its characteristic weapon of defence—passive resistance. Its social structure was preserved but remained in a state of arrested development. The fetters of caste were tightened, the domination of the Brahmans becoming more pronounced with the disappearance of Hindu sovereigns, whose power to raise and lower castes in the social scale had helped to prevent the barriers between them being immutably fixed. There was thus greater rigidity and tendencies to adjustment in response to changing conditions were checked.

There was a certain measure of religious *rapprochement* between the two communities. Hindu tendencies to monotheism and the abandonment of idolatry were strengthened, and theistic movements were started which attempted to find a *via media* between the seemingly incompatible religions. Kabir attempted to reconcile Hinduism and Islam and, selecting elements common to both religions, aimed at founding a religion in which both communities would find a common meeting ground. Nanak also sought to unify Hinduism and Islam. Like Kabir, he denounced idolatry and the inequalities of the caste system and proclaimed the unity of God and the brotherhood of man. Unlike Kabir, he succeeded in establishing a national religion, that of the Sikhs, which drew inspiration from both Islam and the Vedanta and became animated by proselytizing zeal. Though he was a Hindu, his life and teachings led the Muslims of his time to believe that he was a Muslim like themselves, and even now he is regarded by many as having been a Muslim saint. The doctrines preached by both these reformers were not by any means new to Hinduism. The belief in a supreme being, one and infinite, was, and is, familiar to uneducated as well as educated Hindus, and other reformers had already inculcated the spiritual equality of all men. Another and less healthy result of contact with the Muslims was the introduction of the purdah system among the upper classes in North India. The seclusion of women was not unknown even in the early days of Hinduism, but it was confined to princely houses, and its extension to lower ranks of life appears to have been a result of the rule of the Muslims, the object in some cases being to prevent unions with them, while in others the purdah system was adopted in imitation of them. Its prevalence in different parts of the country certainly depended on the extent to which their influence was felt.



Neither in South India nor in those parts of West India where Muslims did not settle in any great numbers, were women forced to live a cloistered life.

Both Muslims and Hindus gave to and received from each other intellectual impulses, and there was a certain synthesis of culture, to which the Muslims made contributions of substantial value. Their architecture, in particular, introduced new forms of building, such as the arch, the dome, and the minaret, and new features of style. Their earlier buildings were marked by a grandeur symbolic of the power of Islam and a somewhat stern simplicity, which seems to have been alien to the Hindu genius; their later buildings combined grace and strength with purity of line and are to this day recognized as masterpieces of architectural skill. Both alike were affected by Hindu workmanship, Islamic forms being modified by Hindu builders. Islamic culture, unlike that of the Hindus, derived much of its inspiration from foreign lands, where it flowered in brilliance. Cairo and Cordova were centres of Muslim culture, as well as Baghdad, which took the place of Alexandria as an intellectual metropolis where the genius of the West met the genius of the East. The common culture of Islam was a bond of union between the Indian-born Musalman and his co-religionists elsewhere—Arabs, Persians, Turks, and Moors. Saints, poets, architects, and travellers came to India from central Asia, Turkey, Persia, and North Africa: the historian, Firishta, was a native of Astrabad on the Caspian Sea; Ibn Batuta came from North Africa: Babar imported architects from Constantinople; according to Persian authorities, the designer of the Taj Mahal was a Turk from the same great city. The Muslims in India felt the impulse of a more than national life and had more contacts with the outer world than the Hindus; the latter would be at home in any part of India, but the former in any country beyond India where Islam was professed. The literature of Arabia and Persia was part of their cultural heritage; the cultured classes were acquainted with the astronomy taught by Ptolemy, with the logic and ethics of Aristotle and Plato, and, through the medium of Avicenna, with the medicine of Hippocrates and Galen; even a savage and blood-thirsty monarch like Muhammad bin Tughlak studied mathematics and physics and had a deep knowledge of Greek logic and philosophy. In addition to these accomplishments they had a gift for government and administration, which came to full fruition in the Mughal empire. That empire established political unity and administrative uniformity in the greater part of India, while its administrative organization spread beyond the limits of its direct rule, being adopted by some of the Hindu states.

By the time of the Mughals the Muslims had become largely

Indianized. Their power had ceased to be a foreign power and there was a certain community of thought and culture. Both Akbar and Jahangir are said to have loved hearing Hindu songs and to have taken a delight in patronizing Hindu poets. Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Shah Jahan, was in close touch with the exponents of Hindu philosophy and had the *Upanishads* translated into Persian. Syncretistic sects which endeavoured to harmonize the religious principles of Hinduism and Islam attracted followers from both religions, many finding common ground in the Sufi doctrines, which, with their conceptions of the immanence of God and of ultimate absorption in the Deity, had affinities with the pantheistic beliefs of Vedantism.

The association of Hindus and Muslims in the administration and in civil life resulted in the formation of a common language, Urdu, which was Hindi in grammar, but used the Persian alphabet and drew largely on the Persian language, and to a smaller extent on Arabic, for its vocabulary. The new language became the lingua franca of the educated classes throughout North India and extended to the Deccan, where it blossomed into a literature. The Hindus were the chief contributors to this literature until the middle of the seventeenth century, and, anomalous as it may seem, it was they who were responsible for an increasingly strong infusion of the Persian element. According to Sir George Grierson,

'the extreme Persianization of Urdu is due to Hindu rather than to Musalman influence. Although Urdu literature is Musalman in its origin, the Persian element was first introduced in excess by the pliant Hindu Kayasths and Khattis employed in the Mughal administration and acquainted with Persian rather than by Persian and Persianized Mughals, who for many centuries used only their own language for literary purposes.'

The influence of Persia was particularly strong when the Mughal empire was at its zenith. The Muslims of India had long been in close contact with that country, which has been aptly described as the France of the East, sending its language and culture to all its neighbours. From it North India derived artistic and intellectual stimuli. The Mughal art of painting was evolved from a fusion of Hindu and Persian styles; traces of European influences can also be seen in the use of perspective and shading, which was due to the introduction of religious pictures by the Jesuits who came to the imperial court. Literary culture was mainly Persian, and Persian was the language of the Emperor's court as well as of official records. Most of the nobles at the court of the Great Mughal and of the King of Golconda were Persians and there was a considerable Persian personnel in the administration, Persians holding

<sup>1</sup> *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (1907), vol. i, p. 365.



offices of trust and dignity in the Mughal empire and in the kingdoms of Golconda and Bijapur. According to Bernier, the Mughal court was a medley of Uzbeks, Persians, Arabs, and Turks, all of whom were known generically as Mughals, but children of the third and fourth generation, who had acquired the brown complexion and languid manners of the country of their birth, were held in much less respect than new-comers, were seldom given official appointments, and would consider themselves lucky if they were allowed to serve as private soldiers.<sup>1</sup> Obviously the change in their mode of living enabled the Muslims transplanted to India to survive, but it lessened their vigour and energy.

From this general and cursory account of cultural influences we may pass to a more detailed sketch of the ordinary life of the people living in the villages, who then, as now, constituted the greater part of the population. Of this we have fortunately a picture drawn by a Bengali poet, Mukunda Ram Chakravarti, late in the sixteenth or early in the seventeenth century—a picture which is unique, for there is no other contemporary account giving details of village life as it was before it was affected by any foreign influences. The Muslims lived in a quarter separate from that of the Hindus and had their *mauleis*, who taught boys in little schools, and their *mullahs*, who met together for the hearing of cases among their co-religionists, always referring to the Koran for guidance in their adjudication—an instance of the extent to which the villagers had their own system of judicial administration. The influence of Hindu environment was seen in the Muslim social divisions, for there were functional groups based on trades and occupations, and in one case on religion, for the families of Hindus who had been converted to Hinduism formed a separate group bearing a separate name. The Brahmans were in another quarter with their temples and *tols*, i.e. schools in which Sanskrit education was imparted. They consisted of the higher class Brahmans and of a lower class in charge of temple worship, who subsisted on contributions given by the villagers, such as a pint of milk from the milkman, a cup of oil from the oilman, and a packet of sweetmeats from the village confectioner. Others gave them small monthly presents in cash, in the form of cowry-shells, which constituted the currency among a people of small means and few worldly possessions. The village bards were similarly dependent on the charity of their neighbours, begging from house to house. Trade was in the hands of Vaisyas, who were said to be 'a happy set of men, always buying and selling'. Trade was not merely local, for they went long journeys by river, their boats going out loaded with local produce and returning with

<sup>1</sup> See Bernier's *Travels in the Mogul Empire* (1891), pp. 3, 209, 211, and V. Ball, *Travels in India by Jean Baptiste Tavernier* (1889), vol. ii, pp. 176-7.



cargoes of luxury articles, such as sandal wood, conch-shells, *pashtu* shawls, and Tibetan fly-whisks. The professional class was represented chiefly by doctors and the writer-caste (Kayasths); the latter were proud of their learning, boasted that they were the ornaments of the place, and on that account claimed that they should have the best lands and houses rent-free. Doctors appear to have thriven, going about dressed in fine clothes with books under their arms; as these books were of palm-leaf, it may be presumed that paper had not reached the villages. They seem to have been empirics and possibly quacks, in some cases puffing out their chests and declaring a cure had been effected, in others hurriedly leaving the house with some excuse if they thought the disease was incurable. Another order of practitioners consisted of Marathas, who tapped for spleen and operated for cataract; they seem to have been held in such low esteem that they lived outside the village or township.

According to the poet, the cultivators were simple, contented, and prosperous; they did not know what deceit or anger was and their houses were filled with grain. There was the usual complement of industrial workers, such as goldsmiths, who, it was said, drew away their wealth from the people, blacksmiths, braziers, potters, carpenters, dyers, oilmen, cotton weavers, and silk weavers, the last of whom were encouraged by the assignment of rent-free lands. One caste tapped date palms and made molasses from the juice which was extracted from them, but there is no mention of liquor being made from the same source or of any liquor shops. There were also depressed classes, whose lot was not unhappy, the fishermen among them being said to lead a merry life. A few glimpses are given of social customs. From a mention of co-wives it may be inferred that polygamy was practised by Hindus. Early marriage was customary, and we are told that a father was worthy of the favour of the gods who could get his daughter married in her ninth year and worthier still if she was married in her seventh year. Sanskrit does not appear to have been entirely a monopoly of the Brahmans, for there is mention of a merchant of lower caste who knew Sanskrit grammar and logic.

The above is a picture of village life peaceful and undisturbed. Elsewhere Mukunda Ram Chakravarti, in describing his personal experiences, tells a very different story, showing the misery to which the rural populace could be reduced by local representatives of the Mughal government, uniting power with irresponsibility. The village lands were surveyed as a preliminary to the assessment of land revenue, in order to ascertain the proportion of the produce or its cash value which the State could claim. The survey was vitiated by false measurements; waste land was entered as arable

and assessed accordingly; the demand was put at such a high figure that it was beyond the capacity of the villagers to pay it. To raise money they sold their stocks of rice and cattle, but they could get only a fraction of their value, and at length there was no one left to buy. They then turned to the money-lenders, who were as cunning and extortionate as their modern representatives, charging exorbitant rates of interest and paying in hard cash only seven-eighths of the agreed sum, the balance being deducted as interest in advance. The money-lenders were 'death' to the people. Guards were stationed round the village to prevent cultivators absconding, but the poet himself managed to make his escape in a state of destitution leaving the holding which had been in the possession of his family for six or seven generations.<sup>1</sup>

Except for the collection of land revenue there was little State control of the villages. The activities of the State did not go farther than the primary functions of defence against external enemies, the prevention of internal rebellion, and the maintenance of law and order. The administrative machinery can scarcely be said to have extended to the villages. The civil functionaries were concentrated in the cities and larger towns; the judicial administration was equally centralized, courts of law being established only in the same centres of population. The only contact with the villages was by means of local officials having their head-quarters in the towns, who were responsible for the patrolling of the main routes, the suppression of organized crime, and the realization of the land revenue. So long as it was paid, and so long as there was no disturbance of the peace endangering the general security or outbreaks of crime preventing the safe passage of travellers and merchandise, the villages were left to manage their own affairs, with headmen and councils of elders to try their petty cases and village watchmen to prevent petty crime.

The State in fact impinged very little on village life except for the collection of land revenue, but the exception is of prime importance, for on the land revenue depended the economic condition of the whole rural population. A few words are necessary to explain the meaning of the term. The land itself was regarded by immemorial custom as the property of the sovereign, who was entitled to a share of the gross produce or its cash equivalent. This constituted what is known as land revenue, which was the mainstay of the State finances and the main burden of the cultivators. It represented their contribution to the expenses of the State, in return for which they were entitled to its protection. Actually, it

<sup>1</sup> J. N. Das Gupta, *Bengal in the Sixteenth Century A.D.* (Calcutta, 1914), pp. 57-95, 155-89; D. C. Sen, *History of Bengali Language and Literature* (Calcutta, 1911), p. 337.



meant in practice that they knew little of government except its exactions. The State performed no function of immediate benefit to the rural masses. In their eyes it appeared only as the power that levied taxes from them. The share recognized by Hindu jurists as the sovereign's legitimate right was one-sixth, but it was fixed at one-third by Akbar, and this was not beyond the economic capacity of the cultivating classes. Neither Jahangir nor Shah Jahan had any idea of making their yoke easy or their burden light. The proportion of the produce due to the State was raised to one-half, with the result that the peasantry were reduced to a mere subsistence level, as the other half was only sufficient to meet the cost of cultivation and provide a family with the necessities of life. There was no margin left to meet the stress of hard times or seasonal calamities, and when famine broke out, there was universal distress and widespread starvation.

Contemporary records are full of the horrors of famine: roads obstructed with the bodies of dead and dying; parents selling their children into slavery; men and women driven by sheer starvation into cannibalism; as stated in the *Badshahnama*, in an account of the famine of 1630-2 which devastated the Deccan and Gujarat, men devoured each other and the flesh of a son was preferred to his love. Of another famine the Dutch traveller van Graaf wrote in an account of his journey from Monghyr to Patna in 1670:

'We saw nothing but poverty and misery among the country folk. Scarcity and famine were greater than had ever been known within the memory of man. The cause was the failure of the rice crop and the inundations of the Ganges. The people died in heaps and their corpses remained extended on the roads, streets, and market-places, since there was no one to bury them or even throw them into the river. These corpses were torn and devoured by wild horses, tigers, wolves, and dogs. We even saw some poor wretches who had still in their mouths grass, leather, and such-like filth. Slaves could be bought for next to nothing.'

Some idea of the loss of population may be gathered from the fact that in the city of Patna alone it was estimated that 91,000 to 103,000 died of starvation in twelve months, while neighbouring towns were depopulated, having not a single inhabitant left, though part of this loss must have been due to migration to regions unaffected by famine.<sup>1</sup> The Government was paralysed in the face of such calamities and unable to maintain order. Villages were pillaged for food, and bands of robbers ranged over the country without let or hindrance. Its measures of relief were mere palliatives. For instance, in the famine of 1630-2 some soup-kitchens for the relief of the destitute were opened; one-eleventh of the revenue was remitted, leaving, however, ten-elevenths to be col-

<sup>1</sup> S. A. Khan, *John Marshall in India (1668-1672)*, (1927), pp. 149-56.



lected; in Burhanpur the small sum of Rs. 5,000 was distributed weekly among 'the deserving poor', but only as long as the Emperor remained in the city, and only on each Monday, that being the day of his accession to the throne.

Even when the spectre of famine was not stalking through the land, the lot of the peasantry was miserable owing to the heavy incidence of the land revenue and the oppressive measures taken for its collection. It was a cardinal principle of Akbar's administration that the officers of State should be paid salaries from the State treasury, but this system was given up by his successors, who preferred to give them assignments (*jagirs*) not so much of land as of the revenue due from it. It also became the practice to sell offices from governorships downwards and to farm out the revenue to the highest bidders. There is a consensus of testimony as to the lamentable results of the system. The Dutchman, Pelsaert, who was in Agra from 1621 to 1627, observed that those who were unable to comply with the exactions of the collectors were seized and their wives and children sold as slaves, though some escaped by taking refuge with rebellious Rajas, leaving their fields, empty and unsown, to relapse into wilderness.<sup>1</sup> The Portuguese missionary Manrique, who was in India in 1629, and again in 1640-1, noticed that the land revenue in Bengal was not only enhanced but collected four to six months in advance, at a time when the crops had not been reaped and the peasants had not the wherewithal to pay unless they had some savings or could borrow from the money-lenders. The root cause of this was, he said, the constant changes of officials, who held office only for short periods at the pleasure of the Emperor, and when they least expected it were transferred or dismissed. 'On this account they always used to collect the revenue in advance, often by force, and when the wretched people have no means of paying, they seize their wives and children, making them into slaves and selling them by auction, if they are heathens', i.e. Hindus.<sup>2</sup> Similar evidence of oppression and resultant penury during the latter part of the reign of Shah Jahan and the early part of Aurangzeb's reign is given by the Frenchmen Tavernier and Bernier. The former, who was in India at five different times between 1640 and 1666, observed that the peasants had for their sole garment a scrap of cloth tied round their loins and were reduced to great poverty because, if the governors became aware that they possessed any property, they seized it straight away by right of force. 'You may see in India whole provinces from whence the peasants have fled on account of the oppressions

<sup>1</sup> W. H. Moreland, *Jahangir's India* (1925), p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> C. E. Luard, *Travels of Fray Sebastian Manrique, 1629-1643* (1927), vol. i, p. 53; L. Cardon, 'Padre Maestro Seb. Manrique in Betgal', *Bengal Past and Present*, 1916.

of the governors'.<sup>1</sup> The latter, who was in India from 1659 to 1667, wrote:

"These poor people, when incapable of discharging the demands of their rapacious lords, are not only deprived of the means of subsistence but are bereft of their children, who are carried away as slaves. Thus it happens that many of the peasantry, driven to despair by so execrable a tyranny, abandon the country and seek a more tolerable mode of existence, either in the towns or the camps as bearers of burdens, carriers of water, or servants to horsemen. Sometimes they fly to the territories of a Raja because they find less oppression and are allowed a greater degree of comfort."<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that there were more clement masters in the shape of Rajas in whose territories the Mughal tax-collector had no place, and it may also be reasonably presumed that local oppression must have been mitigated by the fear that the receipts from land revenue would be reduced by the abandonment of cultivation and the desertion of villages. It is obvious, however, that there must have been a considerable displacement of population owing to the drift to the towns and camps, where cultivators could find a less precarious existence, and that there was a serious economic loss caused by industrious agriculturists being deprived of their means of livelihood and reduced to the state of unskilled labourers or completely submerged as slaves. Even without this addition to their numbers, the slaves must have been an appreciable part of the population. Many were descendants of Hindus who were the prize of war, and some of Muslims taken in open rebellion. It is on record that when Firoz Shah (Jalal-ud-din) invaded Rohilkhand in 1290, the Indian-born Muslims were not put to the sword or trampled to death by elephants, as the Hindus were, but distributed among the chiefs as slaves. Another and greater Firoz Shah (1351-88) was, according to his historian, Zia-ud-din Barani, 'very diligent in providing slaves', charging his great fief-holders and officers to capture them whenever they were at war; during his reign there were altogether 180,000 slaves in Delhi and the various fiefs. Besides the descendants of prisoners of war there were, as we have just seen, the unfortunate cultivators who could not pay the land-tax, and debtors who might either be taken over or sold as slaves, with their families, in satisfaction of debts. The poor sold themselves and their children in times of scarcity as well as of acute famine. The same fate awaited robbers and rebels. Akbar forbade the enslavement of prisoners of war, but the practice still went on; one provincial governor who held office in North India in the early part of the seventeenth century boasted that he

<sup>1</sup> V. Ball, *Travels in India of Jean Baptiste Tavernier* (1889), vol. ii, p. 391.

<sup>2</sup> *Travels in the Mogul Empire* (1891), p. 205.



had beheaded 200,000 rebels and made prisoners of half a million more, all of whom he had sold as slaves, adding, by way perhaps of justification, that all of them had become Muslims and that their descendants would number millions, all professing the true faith. Added to all these, there were a certain number of foreign slaves imported from Abyssinia, the east coast of Africa, and Persia, but these were luxuries which only the rich could afford.

The agricultural classes appear to have fared no better in the Hindu kingdoms in the south of India, where the Mughal writ did not run. There too administrative offices were sold to the highest bidders, the term for which they might be held being only a year in one kingdom. The revenues were farmed out for short terms and the revenue farmers, like the office holders, were frequently changed. All made haste to acquire wealth during the brief period of their office or farm, and the peasantry were forced to pay to the utmost limit of their resources, default being punished by floggings of which the victims were sometimes beaten to death; there is some grim satisfaction in knowing that the same punishment was occasionally meted out to defaulting governors. On a general survey it would seem that the Hindu land revenue system in the south was as oppressive to the peasantry as the Mughal system in the north. Mr. Moreland, after a careful study of the records, comes to the conclusion that for the south of India, taken as a whole, the first half of the seventeenth century was a period when the mass of the people were forced by the administrative system on to the border-line of starvation or rebellion.<sup>1</sup>

In sharp contrast to the impoverished condition of the humble agriculturists was the wealth enjoyed by State dignitaries and nobles, who made large fortunes and lived in ostentatious luxury but were also patrons of both the fine and the applied arts. Attached to many of their palaces were workshops filled with artists and skilled craftsmen engaged in painting, lacquer work, gold-work and jewellery, embroidery, the making of rich brocades, &c. Art depended on patronage; without a patron no one could obtain eminence in art. Some members of the imperial family and court were themselves men of culture and wide interests, and a few had a *penchant* for Hindu culture. Philosophy, astronomy, geography, and anatomy were the favourite studies of Bernier's own employer, a Persian, whose title (Danishmand Khan) attested his learning. He discussed with Bernier Harvey's recent discovery of the circulation of the blood and the philosophy of Gassendi and of Descartes, and read the works of the latter in a translation into Persian which Bernier spent five or six years making for him. 'He could no more dispense with his philosophical studies in the afternoon than

<sup>1</sup> *India from Akbar to Aurangzeb* (1923), pp. 244-5.



avoid devoting his morning to his weighty duties as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Grand Master of the Horse.<sup>1</sup>

Nobility was personal and not hereditary. There was a nobility consisting of men holding commands in the army or high appointments in the public service, as well as a *noblesse de cour* attached to the emperor's court. Instead of obtaining posts by reason of high birth, men obtained nobility by receiving military or civil appointments, and rank depended on the posts they held. There was an aristocracy of office with no hereditary privileges and little heritable wealth. Assignments of land, called *jagirs*, were made subject to the condition that the grantees supplied contingents of troops, and when the liability continued from father to son, the grants tended to become hereditary. Otherwise grants were resumed on dismissal from or termination of office. In the case of death even the private property of the official aristocracy could be escheated. Their families might as an act of grace be allowed a competence or a mere pittance, but they had no positive right of inheritance. Before his accession to the throne Aurangzeb made a protest against this practice in a letter to his father Shah Jahan.

'It is your wish', he wrote, 'that I should adhere rigidly to the old custom and declare myself heir to every person who dies in my service. We have been accustomed, as soon as a noble or rich merchant has ceased to breathe, nay sometimes before the vital spark has fled, to place seals on his coffers, to imprison and beat the servants or officers of his household until they make a full disclosure of the whole property, even of the most inconsiderable jewel. The practice is advantageous, no doubt; but can we deny its injustice and cruelty?'

It does not, however, appear that, when he succeeded to the throne, this advantageous old custom was abandoned. He formally gave up his rights, but actually they were enforced on the plea that debts due to the State must be paid. The result was to prevent the aristocracy of office becoming a hereditary nobility living on accumulated capital and unearned income. As Bernier pointed out, families could not long maintain their distinction but were soon extinguished; the sons, or at least the grandsons, of a noble were generally reduced almost to beggary and compelled to enlist as troopers in the army. This levelling process, however, was confined to those whose tenure of office was their patent of nobility. An ancient *noblesse* survived in areas outside the sphere of direct Mughal rule, as for instance among the Rajputs of Rajputana with their numerous clans and chiefs.

In the letter quoted above Aurangzeb referred to the practice of escheating the property of rich merchants, whose widows con-

<sup>1</sup> *Travels in the Mogul Empire* (1891), pp. 324, 352-3.

cealed their wealth in order to prevent its confiscation. This withdrawal of capital from large businesses must have been a serious check to development. Merchants were also liable to occasional capital levies during their lifetime. In 1674, for example, a Governor of Orissa on visiting Balasore, which was a commercial emporium but not a great city, is said to have exacted Rs. 500,000 from one unfortunate merchant, and sums varying from Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 50,000 from others, on the ironical plea that he expected a warm welcome on the first visit to the town. Mir Jumla, Governor of Bengal under Shah Jahan, on one occasion demanded a contribution of Rs. 50,000 from the merchants of Dacca, and, when they offered a meagre Rs. 10,000, had them whipped. This having failed to coerce them, Mir Jumla had two of their chief men thrown on the ground and threatened to have them trampled to death by elephants. The merchants then gave in and compromised for half the original demand, while the bankers of the city made haste to appease Mir Jumla by paying Rs. 300,000 without demur.<sup>1</sup> Occasionally the rapacity of local governors was kept in check by an appeal or threat of an appeal to the Emperor, while merchants could exercise collective pressure by suspending their business. Thus, in 1616, all the Hindu merchants of Surat, refusing to submit quietly to exactions, shut up their shops, and left the town in a body declaring that they would go to the Emperor and get justice from him. The threat was sufficient for the Governor, who promptly induced them to return by promising them better treatment in future.

It has been pointed out by an authority on Indian economics that up to the eighteenth century Indian methods of production and of industrial and commercial organization could challenge comparison with those in any other part of the world.<sup>2</sup> It is certain that in spite of irregular exactions and capital levies large fortunes were made by trade. Manrique estimated that there were as many as 600 brokers and middlemen at Patna, most of whom were wealthy men. At Agra he met merchants of immense wealth, and, if he can be believed, saw money piled up like heaps of grain in their houses. There were some merchant princes at the head of firms which had branches in all the main commercial centres of the empire, controlled the wholesale trade, and were advanced enough to use bills of exchange or letters of credit and to engage in insurance business, including marine insurance. One of them, Virji Vora of Surat, who was a banker as well as a merchant, was reputed to be the richest merchant in the world. He was the monopolist of European imports on the west coast, being at the head of syndi-

<sup>1</sup> W. H. Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb* (1923), p. 292.

<sup>2</sup> V. Anatey, *The Economic Development of India* (1936), p. 5.



cates which bought up cargoes valued at five hundred thousand rupees. In the next century there were, as Burke remarked, merchants and bankers who vied in capital with the Bank of England and whose credit often supported a tottering State. Prominent among them were the Seths of Murshidabad, a Marwari firm of millionaire bankers, who dominated the Indian financial world. They financed both the farmers of revenue and the government of Bengal, to which they gave bills of exchange at sight of a crore of rupees (equivalent to a million sterling), and have been not unaptly called the Rothschilds of India.

There was, according to Bernier, no middle state at Delhi. 'A man must be of the highest rank or live miserably.'<sup>1</sup> This statement appears to be too sweeping. He himself mentioned rich merchants, tradesmen, and shopkeepers, though they had to conceal their wealth for fear of exactions and assume 'the garb of indigence', and he referred to the wealth acquired by astrologers, who were consulted by the nobles and were regarded as eminently learned. There were too military officers and civil functionaries belonging to intermediary grades, while physicians were numerous. Van Linschoten, who lived in Goa from 1583 to 1589, noticed that the Indian doctors there had a lucrative practice among both the Portuguese and their own countrymen and were held in high honour and esteem.<sup>2</sup> Although, however, there was a middle class, it was comparatively small, and, with some exceptions, it appears to have been of little social importance.

It is clear from contemporary accounts that the lower classes, both mercantile and industrial, were exploited, more especially in the cities, by men of place and power, unless they could secure their protection or win their favour; shopkeepers, for instance, had to sell goods to them for less than half their value. Some were admittedly well-to-do, but had to make a parade of poverty for fear of being prosecuted on false charges and having their property confiscated. Forced labour was exacted from artisans and handicraftsmen who were not in the exclusive employment of a noble; they were dragged from their houses or seized in the streets, beaten if they protested, and paid half their proper wages or nothing at all. In the provinces both trade and industry were hampered by a number of imposts, of which Sir Jadunath Sarkar has enumerated fifty-four.<sup>3</sup> Some were reasonable enough, such as customs-duties, licence-fees for traders, dues corresponding to octroi, and a kind of income-tax (*zakat*) levied at the rate of 2½ per cent.; but others were taxes on the necessities of the poor, such as imposts on

<sup>1</sup> *Travels in the Mogul Empire* (1891), p. 352.

<sup>2</sup> *Voyage to the East Indies* (1885), vol. i, p. 230.

<sup>3</sup> *Mughal Administration* (Calcutta, 1920), pp. 120-6.



the sale of milk, vegetables, cow-dung cakes, and other kinds of fuel; the worst was a tax on the birth of male children. Their long duration and cumulative effect may be judged from the account given by a Muslim historian of Aurangzeb's reign, Shihab-ud-din Talish, who wrote:

'From the first occupation of India and its ports by the Muhammadans to the end of Shah Jahan's reign it was a rule and practice to exact *hasil* (revenue) from every trader, from the rose vendor down to the clay vendor, from the weaver of fine linen to that of coarse cloth, to collect house-tax from new-comers and hucksters, to take *sakat* from travellers, merchants, and stable-keepers. As Sa'di has said: "At first oppression's basis was small, but every successive generation increased it" till at last in all provinces, especially Bengal, it reached such a stage that tradesmen and merchants gave up their business and householders went into exile. . . . None of the Delhi sovereigns, in spite of their efforts to strengthen the Faith and follow the rules of the Prophet, put down these wicked practices. Only, we read in histories, Firoz Shah forbade these unjust exactions. But after him they were restored, nay increased.<sup>1</sup>

The historian proceeded to mention various monopolies and exactions which had been common. The governors, for instance, made monopolies of articles of food and clothing; in money-suits the courts took a fourth of the amount of the claim or loan by way of court fees; the same deduction was made if stolen property was recovered. In many parts, but not all, it was the practice that when a man died without leaving a son, 'all his property including even his wife and daughter' was taken possession of by the representative of the government or the local landholder.<sup>2</sup> He stated that Aurangzeb, on ascending the throne, issued orders prohibiting such exactions, and that the local governor, Shaista Khan, an uncle of Aurangzeb, abolished others *suo motu*; but the Emperor's decrees, like mandates of a similar nature promulgated by his predecessors, were generally ignored. Control over outlying provinces was not strong or close, and distant governors were sufficiently independent to be able to defeat the benevolent intentions of the Emperor. Most of the taxes or cesses were levied as before. The governors' monopolies were maintained, extending even to firewood, fodder, and thatch; and Shaista Khan, who was held up to admiration by the chronicler as a model of moderation and justice, amassed a fortune which was estimated, and no doubt over-estimated, at 38 crores of rupees or as many million pounds sterling.

On a general view of the Mughal empire after Akbar's death it seems impossible to resist the conclusion that the people generally were the tools and slaves of power, little more than revenue-

<sup>1</sup> Jadumath Sarkar, 'Shaista Khan in Bengal', *Journal of the Asiatic Society* (1906), vol. ii, pp. 263-4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.

paying units with practically no rights as against the State. The administration appears to have been a huge money-making machine worked for the benefit of the ruling classes. There was great wealth but it was unevenly distributed, the masses being sunk in poverty, while a small class lived in luxury with riches 'wrung', as Pelsaert said, 'from the sweat of the poor'. The imperial splendour was maintained by a continuous drain on a hard-driven, ground-down peasantry. Their resources were eaten up to augment the magnificence of the State, and, being inspired by no national sentiment, they were without the satisfaction of feeling that they suffered for the greater glory of the empire. Sir Thomas Roe used no exaggerated language when he said that the people 'live as fishes in the sea—the great ones eat up the little. . . . The greater rob the lesser and the King robs all'.

The downfall of the Mughal empire was due primarily to the fact that the tolerant policy of Akbar was abandoned by his successors, while taxation became so oppressive as to be intolerable. Akbar based his policy on an *entente* with Hindu princes. He derived his military strength largely from their support, and himself married Hindu princesses. He associated Hindus closely with his rule, advancing Rajputs to high command in the army and to responsible office in the State. He gave a practical proof of the equality of Hindus as tax-payers by abolishing the *jizya*, i.e. a poll-tax imposed on non-believers, which was an economic form of religious differentiation, and he made a remarkable concession to Hindu sentiment by orders constituting the slaughter of cows a capital offence. On the other hand he took measures for the repression of suttee. It was not absolutely prohibited but permission had first to be obtained from officers of government, and permission seems to have been given as a matter of course when a childless woman was firm in her resolution.<sup>1</sup> Akbar was, however, unable to establish an equal law owing to the fact that it was a principle of Koranic law that the testimony of an unbeliever could not be entertained against that of a Muslim, and no Muslim sovereign had a right to change that law by an iota. In practice this meant a denial of justice to Hindus except in cases against their co-religionists.

<sup>1</sup> According to Pelsaert, governors did their best to dissuade widows from immolating themselves, but, by Jahangir's orders, were not allowed to withhold their sanction if their resolution could not be shaken. Tavernier observed that widows who had children were not allowed in any circumstances to burn, and that in other cases governors did not readily give permission, but could be bribed to do so. See W. H. Moreland, *Jahangir's India* (1925), pp. 78-9; V. Ball, *Travels in India by Jean Baptiste Tavernier* (1889), vol. II, pp. 210-11. Orington, however, said in his *Voyage to Surat in 1689* that suttee had almost been given up owing to the orders against it and had become very rare except among the wives of Rajas.



His son Jahangir and his grandson Shah Jahan, both of whom had Hindu mothers, continued his policy until 1632, when Shah Jahan prohibited the building of new temples and ordered the demolition of all under construction. The prohibition against cow-killing, which was in force at any rate till 1626, appears also to have been allowed to fall into abeyance. Shah Jahan, however, was no persecutor; the existing shrines were not touched; and he showed remarkable consideration for the susceptibilities of his Hindu subjects. On this aspect of his rule a curious side-light is thrown by an experience of the Portuguese missionary-traveller Manrique. In a village where he stopped for the night, one of his followers, a Musalman, killed two peacocks, birds sacred in the eyes of Hindus, and did his best to conceal the traces of his deed by burying their feathers. The sacrilege was, however, detected, the whole party arrested, and the offender sentenced to have a hand amputated, though this punishment was eventually commuted to a whipping by the local official, who explained that the Emperor had taken an oath that he and his successors would let the Hindus live under their own laws and customs and tolerated no breach of them.<sup>1</sup>

With Aurangzeb (1659-1707) bigotry outran discretion and the duties of a ruler were subordinated to the self-imposed obligations of a zealot. Hindu officials were dismissed from service; the *jizya* or poll-tax was reimposed; Hindu merchants were compelled to pay custom-duties at a rate double that imposed on their Muslim competitors. Orders were issued for the demolition not only of temples under construction but also of those built during the preceding twelve years. Religious fairs were stopped, and the inferiority of Hindus was accentuated by galling distinctions, e.g. as to the kind of conveyance they might use. This policy was suicidal. Hinduism under the goad of persecution became militant, and national movements sprang up among the Marathas and Sikhs, which brought down the Mughal empire in ruins. In any case, however, it seems doubtful whether the empire could have endured. The establishment of its rule in a country as large as Europe without Russia was as extraordinary a phenomenon as the empire of Charlemagne in western Europe, and the causes of its decomposition were similar to those which brought about the downfall of the latter. The system of government was at once centralized and loosely organized, and a break-up was inevitable without a strong ruler capable of holding together territories of such vast extent. The line of strong sovereigns which began with Akbar ended with Aurangzeb, whose successors had neither vigour nor sagacity. Disorganization and anarchy ensued, as the

<sup>1</sup> C. E. Luard, *Travels of Fray Sebastian Manrique, 1629-43* (1927), vol. II, pp. 106-14.



Mughal empire had crushed minor principalities and powers out of existence and the Hindus proved unable to achieve a union sufficiently close and strong to take its place.<sup>1</sup>

As a Greek proverb says, when the oak falls, every man gathers wood, and the prostrate empire was stripped by spoilers on every side. Governors of provinces became independent, soldiers of fortune carved out kingdoms for themselves, local potentates usurped power within smaller areas. The country was swept by invasions from without and rebellions from within. In 1739 Nadir Shah of Persia captured Delhi and for nine hours on end watched the indiscriminate massacre of its inhabitants. This was followed by repeated invasions of Afghans from 1748 to 1762. Inland territories were laid waste by the Marathas, of whose invasions poignant accounts are given by contemporary writers. A Hindu poet, Gangaram, says that they stripped the fields of their produce and the granaries of their contents, and then set fire to the villages, burning every house. Though the Marathas were Hindus, they neither spared temples, which went up in flames, nor scrupled to kill cows, Brahmans and ascetics (Sannyasis), while women were put to death and ravished wholesale. Those who had money saved their lives by giving up all they had; those who could not satisfy their demands were tortured or murdered. Some had their hands or their noses and ears cut off, others were killed outright, strangled, or drowned.<sup>2</sup> A Muslim historian describes similar horrors, saying that from the north of Bengal to the south 'these murderous free-booters' drowned many in the rivers after cutting off their ears, noses, and hands, and mangled and burnt others with indescribable tortures.<sup>3</sup> It must, however, be pointed out that the Maratha invasions were not continuous but periodic. They took place only in the dry season after the rains were over and came to an end with the bursting of the monsoon. The villagers, moreover, in the neighbourhood of the European settlements and such larger towns as were capable of defence took refuge in them, and as soon as the Marathas retired, returned to their homes and set to work to plough their fields, sow their crops, and, if possible, harvest them before another invasion drove them away. While, however, the invasions lasted, agriculture and industry were suspended and productive activity ceased.

<sup>1</sup> 'It was an era of chaos unprecedented even in the annals of Asiatic history, an era such as only follows the break up of a wide-spreading empire which has so carefully knocked out and cut away all internal or local stays and ties that its fall, when it comes, is a ruinous crash and leaves a vast territory in a state of political dissolution.' Sir A. Lyall, *Asiatic Studies, Religious and Social* (1884), p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> Jadunath Sarker, *Fall of the Mughal Empire* (Calcutta, 1932), vol. i, pp. 86-8.

<sup>3</sup> 101.

<sup>4</sup> *Rajaz-i-Salutin*, translation by Abdus Salam (Calcutta, 1904), p. 344.

In Bengal and Bihar, their first acquisitions, the British inherited a legacy of lawlessness and distress. The forms of Mughal administration remained but many of its functions were assumed by self-constituted authorities. Trade along the rivers and roads was subject to the illegal tolls levied by the myrmidons of great landholders as well as to the legitimate customs or transit dues collected by customs officers. Judicial functions were exercised by anyone strong enough to compel others to submit to his jurisdiction. So far from taking over a government in working order, the British had to build up a civilized polity in the place of one which was in ruins and to set up institutions capable of holding society together. Peace had to be restored, and a system of administration improvised by men who had no administrative training or experience and, except for trade, little knowledge of the country. Their first association with the work of administration, under what is called the system of dual government (1765-72), is a discreditable and shameful page of British history, which was summed up in a contemporary Muslim history, the *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*: 'The new rulers paid no attention to the concerns of the people and suffered them to be mercilessly oppressed and tormented by officers of their own appointing.'

It was left to Warren Hastings to lay the foundations of stable government, on which Cornwallis erected the framework of an administrative system operated by a public service. To the former is due the credit of establishing law and order on a surer basis and of giving the territory under the East India Company sufficient security of life and property to make progress possible. Lawlessness was still rife. Early records are full of the trouble caused by bands of robbers, then called banditti or dacoits. Warren Hastings wrote that the whole province, even to the boundaries of Calcutta, was a prey to dacoits.<sup>1</sup> Twelve battalions had to be raised to enforce the collection of the land revenue. As late as 1778 one outlying district was so out of hand that it neither paid revenue nor acknowledged the authority of the East India Company. According to a military officer who was on service in it, the people were 'always at war among themselves, one village destroying another'.<sup>2</sup>

The authority of law was, however, gradually established. It was made clear that the government could not be defied with impunity, that the exercise of arbitrary power could no longer be tolerated, and that the weak would be protected against the strong and unscrupulous. Civil and criminal courts were set up in each

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Keith, *Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy, 1750-1921* (1922), vol. i, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> W. C. Macpherson, *Soldiering in India, 1764-1787* (1928), p. 377.



district; trade was freed from the vexatious imposts which had crippled it. On the other hand, the system of farming the revenue for short periods was continued with disastrous results to the landholders, one of whom voiced the common feeling of his fellows when he complained of the frustration of their hopes of a mild administration in the place of anarchy and disorder.

'Look', he said, 'into our homes: our widowed mothers, reduced to penury, in vain call upon us, who have mortgaged almost every valuable in their support; our sisters pine in celibacy for want of portions and men of property equal to their rank. When we look forward, future misery adds poignancy to present want, and the retrospect of past splendour aggravates all.'<sup>1</sup>

Warren Hastings himself did not claim to have effected a complete system of administration and wrote to his friend John Stewart: 'Though I made a number of chops and changes, I never called myself a reformer.' But the people were quick to acknowledge the benefits of the changes which he made: the general reaction was one of relief and gratitude. In addresses which were sent to England during his impeachment—spontaneous expressions of opinion at a time when they had nothing to gain and nothing to hope for from him—they declared that he had laid the foundations of justice and the pillars of the law; tyranny and oppression were not permitted, and the people lived in ease and peace. In the same spirit the closing words of the Muslim history, *Riyazu-s-Salatin* (1788) eulogized the English as 'unrivalled in their laws for the administration of justice, for the safety of their subjects, for extermination of tyranny, and for protection of the weak. . . . And, notwithstanding their difference of creed, they do not interfere with the faith, laws, and religion of Musalmans.'<sup>2</sup>

We may now give a sketch of conditions in other parts of the country immediately before the inception of British rule in them.

In the Northern Circars,<sup>3</sup> which were acquired in 1766, the whole system of government had been disorganized to such an extent that not only the forms but even the remembrance of civil authority seemed to be lost. Farther south, in the territories which were ceded in 1800, Sir Thomas Munro declared in the following year that a decade of Mughal government (in Cuddapah) had been almost as destructive as so many years of war. 'This last year', he wrote, 'a mutinous unpaid army was turned loose in the sowing season to collect their pay from the villages. They drove off and sold the cattle, extorted money by torture from every man

<sup>1</sup> See J. W. Kaye, *Administration of the East India Company* (1853), pp. 117-19.

<sup>2</sup> Translation by Abdul Salam (Calcutta, 1914), p. 414.

<sup>3</sup> The territory in the north of Madras which includes the modern districts of Ganjam, Vizagapatam, Godavari, Kistna, and Guntur.

who fell into their hands, and plundered the houses and shops of those who fled.<sup>1</sup> The visitations of the Nizam's army were not the only burden of the people. There were eighty local chieftains who carried on destructive feuds, while their little armies, aggregating about 30,000, subsisted by rapine. These may be regarded as licensed looters. There were also unauthorized plunderers in the form of bands of robbers who wandered through the country, murdering and robbing like the banditti of Bengal. There appear to have been no governmental courts of justice, the villagers and the heads of castes being left to settle disputes among themselves; even in Tanjore, with its comparative prosperity, a court was established by the Raja only at the close of the eighteenth century at the suggestion of his guardian, the Danish missionary Schwartz.

In the principalities along the west coast many old Hindu customs were still in force. In Malabar trials by ordeal were general, one common form being for the accused to plunge his hand in a cauldron of burning oil; resort was also had to them in capital cases in the British settlement at Tellicherry. The untouchables were treated as serfs and cleared off the roads not only when Brahmans passed but even when their food was being carried along them. In Travancore untouchables hid themselves in ditches or climbed up trees to prevent atmospheric pollution; if a Nair accidentally met one of them on the road, he cut him down with his sword with as little compunction as a noxious animal. Anyone killing a cow or selling it for slaughter was executed; a man who was found selling a bullock to a European was impaled alive in 1772. Low caste women were required to keep their bosoms covered; one who had the impertinence to wear a dress when appearing before a member of the ruling family had her breasts cut off. Actual slavery was common; at the sea-port of Anjengo there was a slave market, at which a brisk business went on even when there was no famine or any unusual scarcity. A fisherwoman offered to sell a boy to James Forbes for a rupee simply because she was expecting another; when he refused her offer, she sold the child to a Portuguese for half that price. During famines the number who sold themselves or their children as slaves at the sea-ports was infinitely greater; a mother would sell her infant son for a bag of rice and a man part with his wife and children for Rs. 40 or Rs. 50.<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of the nineteenth century a great part of what is now British India was still under the dominion of the Marathas, whose empire was no longer united but a loose confederacy of great princes, Sindhia of Gwalior and Malwa, Holkar of Indore,

<sup>1</sup> G. R. Gleig, *The Life of Major-General Sir Thomas Munro* (1830), vol. i, pp. 320-1.

<sup>2</sup> See J. Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs* (1834), vol. i, pp. 201, 238, 241, 251-4; vol. ii, p. 228.



the Gaekwar of Baroda, and the Bhonsla of Nagpur and Berar, all under the nominal suzerainty of the Peshwa at Poona. Their armies had ceased to be national. The Marathas, who were nearly all cavalrymen, were little more than a bare majority of the total number. The infantry was recruited chiefly from Hindustan and consisted mainly of Rajputs, Rohillas, and other Muslim mercenaries, with a few hundred European officers. They were generally in arrears of pay and lived by pillage and extortion in the countries in which they were quartered. The Marathas were a fighting race with a genius for predatory warfare and were more concerned with the raising of revenue than with the discharge of governmental functions as now understood; it was a system which has been epigrammatically described as not government of a low type but robbery of a high type.<sup>1</sup> The revenue was derived from three sources, viz. the land revenue and other taxes in territory under direct rule, subsidies (*chauth*) paid by countries outside the Maratha empire as the price of immunity against attack—a kind of blackmail—and the spoils of campaigns conducted against those which were still independent. A minor source of revenue was the sequestration of the property of great officers of state on their death; the Marathas appear, however, to have been more generous than the Mughals, for the families of the deceased were generally given pensions or otherwise provided for. The principles of finance were vicious, as predatory war was regarded as a source of revenue. A European officer in the Peshwa's service observed in 1796 that the empire always considered itself in a state of war;<sup>2</sup> and the returns of war were constantly diminishing as the resources of the countries which it ravaged became exhausted. Writing in 1817, Sir Thomas Munro described the Marathas as little better than a horde of imperial thieves and declared that their government had been one of the most destructive that ever existed in India. All other Hindu states, he said, took a pride in the improvement of the country and in the construction of temples, canals, reservoirs, and other public works. 'The Mahrattas have done nothing of this kind; their work has been chiefly desolation. They did not seek their revenue in the improvement of the country but in the exactions of the established 'chout', from their neighbours and in predatory excursions to levy more.'<sup>3</sup>

At the end of the eighteenth century the civil administration exhibited some of the worst features of the Mughal system, though there were exceptions; Ahalya Bai, for instance, was an exemplary

<sup>1</sup> Sir J. Seeley, *The Expansion of England* (1883), p. 303.

<sup>2</sup> W. H. Tone, 'Illustrations of Some Institutions of the Mahratta People', *Asiatic Annual Register*, 1798-9, p. 131.

<sup>3</sup> G. R. Gleig, *The Life of Major-General Sir Thomas Munro* (1830), vol. i, pp. 472-3.

sovereign and her rule in Malwa from 1765 to 1795 a model of good government. In order to meet the expenses of constant wars the ruling princes took loans from great bankers, at a ruinous discount, on the security of their revenues, which were mortgaged years in advance. The land revenue was farmed out and offices, great and small, sold to the highest bidders, who could not count on holding them for more than a year. The agricultural classes were reduced to a subsistence level and were without resources when the crops failed. As in the preceding century, there were recurring famines with terrible loss of life, particularly in the north-west. Tone, the officer already mentioned, stated that Maratha rule brought with it oppression, poverty, and famine, the last of which was 'the prime curse' of Hindustan. No one raised more crops than were sufficient to pay the revenue and to keep his family for a year. The first failure of rain produced a famine, during which the streets were strewn with carcasses and the highways with skeletons.

'It is no uncommon circumstance for large cities in the time of famine to lose three-fourths of their inhabitants, and the country suffers in the same degree; frequently whole districts are swept away and for years remain a jungle. I believe it may be safely asserted that through the whole country (Bengal and Bahar excepted) one acre in fifty is not cultivated.'

There are no data by which this estimate can be checked, but there is no doubt as to the depopulation and widespread havoc caused by famines at this period. Sir Charles Malet in 1785 found the country near Gwalior practically depopulated and the villages in ruins. He only occasionally saw a poor half-starved wretch looking out from some ruined hovel. At Gwalior the streets were strewn with skeletons. The villages from Gwalior to Agra were generally uninhabited. Agra was 'a chaotic heap of desolation'. It was with difficulty and danger that he and his party could keep their horses on their feet amidst a magnificent but terrible mass of ruin. The Taj Mahal was intact but a Maratha chief had appropriated it for his residence. The vicinity of Cawnpore was infested by wolves attracted by the dead bodies of poor wretches who crawled there in search of relief and died from weakness before they could obtain it; the avenues leading to the cantonment were filled with their remains. Wolves carried off children and even attacked sentries, who had consequently to be doubled.<sup>2</sup> The ravages of famine did not check the exactions of the Maratha tax-collectors or the depredations of bands of robbers. An Indian

<sup>1</sup> *Asiatic Annual Register*, 1798-9, pp. 133-5.

<sup>2</sup> J. Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs* (1834), vol. ii, pp. 407, 410-11, 437.



account, written about 1788, spoke of crowds of starving people wandering about from place to place in search of food, stripped of their few possessions by robbers, and tortured by tax-collectors, who often burnt their helpless victims alive.<sup>1</sup>

In North India the combined result of war, famine, and oppression was the devastation of many areas. Its extent cannot be gauged, but contemporary accounts and later records make it clear that it was considerable. Thomas Twining, describing the country near Delhi in 1794, wrote that its plains had been reduced to a desert and its forests filled with wild beasts. 'The tract round Koil in the Aligarh district, which was administered, and well administered, by de Boigne, the Savoyard general of Mahadji Sindhia, was a cheering object 'after the depopulation of the country so far'. When Twining went on, the country resumed its desolate appearance. It was 'a flat waste abandoned entirely to nature, no sign of human industry being visible'.<sup>2</sup> Forty-two years later Sir William Sleeman met men in the Mathura district who remembered it as it was under the government of the Jats and Marathas, when Sikh freebooters massacred the whole of the population in some villages and part of it in others, and the lands of those who were killed lay waste for want of cultivators. One man estimated that the greater part of the country was a wild jungle; another that invasions and civil wars kept at least two-thirds of the land waste.<sup>3</sup> The people of a district within fifty miles of Delhi were never tired of telling Sir Denzil Ibbetson of the desolate state of the country in the early years of the nineteenth century. 'More than four-fifths of the area was overrun by thick forest which afforded shelter to thieves, vagabonds, and beasts of prey, and its inhabitants either removed or exterminated; out of 221 villages in a single *pargana* the people of 178 had been wholly driven from their homes and fields.'<sup>4</sup>

Except for the system of *panchayats* little good can be said of the Maratha judicial administration. In Central India the legal institutions of the Mughal empire fell into neglect or were set aside except that in a few towns Muslim law-officers (*Kazis*) drew up marriage contracts or registered deeds of sale. Hindu law replaced the Islamic code, but its administration was venal and corrupt; Sir John Malcolm came to the conclusion that 'with the exception of Ahalya Bai justice became from the first establishment of the Marathas a source of profit to those who had power for the moment, from the military prince upon his throne to the lowest

<sup>1</sup> W. H. Moreland and Sir A. C. Chatterjee, *Short History of India* (1936), p. 282.

<sup>2</sup> *Travels in India a hundred years ago* (1893), pp. 268, 274, 283.

<sup>3</sup> *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official* (1893), vol. ii, pp. 49, 50, 53.

<sup>4</sup> Loc. cit., Sir J. Strachey, *India: Its Administration and Progress* (1911), p. 424. A *pargana* is a revenue sub-division of a district.

Brahman who, as a delegated *karkoon* or agent, tyrannized over his village'.<sup>1</sup>

Better things might have been expected in the Deccan, where the administration was in the hands of Brahmans versed in Hindu law; but we have it on the authority of Mountstuart Elphinstone that even there the criminal system was in the last stage of disorder and corruption. Local magnates took on themselves the functions of magistrates and judges, and their courts were instruments of power rather than of justice. 'No law seems ever to have been referred to except in cases of religion where *shastris*<sup>2</sup> were sometimes consulted. The only rule seems to have been the custom of the country and the magistrate's notion of expediency. The Hindu law was quite disused.'<sup>3</sup> Punishments were arbitrary and uneven. Caste affected the penalties inflicted. A man of good caste was seldom sentenced to death except for offences against the State. The capital sentence was not imposed for murder unless peculiarly atrocious, but it was passed in cases of highway robbery because this was a crime committed by low-caste people. Women were never put to death; the extreme penalty in their case was cutting off the nose, ears, and breasts. Many other punishments were barbarous and cruel, such as cutting a man to pieces with a sword, crushing his head with a mallet, and cutting off a hand or foot, the nose or ears. The difference in punishments for the same offence was extraordinary; one man, for example, was fined for a theft and another thrown down from a height on to a spike, the reason for the difference being that in the former case the property was accidentally recovered and in the latter it was not.

Substantial, cheap, and speedy justice was, however, obtained from the *panchayats* in civil cases affecting real and personal property. The *panchayats* were recognized by all Maratha rulers, the worst of whom did not challenge their right of jurisdiction, while the best encouraged and made full use of them. 'In proportion', said Sir John Malcolm, 'as justice was administered through this channel, it was popular or the reverse.' Of their actual working we have an account from the pen of James Forbes, who was in charge of a district from 1780, when it was taken from the Marathas, to 1783, when it was handed back to them, and during these three years continued the existing system. With him were associated four leading Brahmans, four Muslims (including a *Kazi*) familiar with Koranic law, some respectable merchants, and the heads of different castes. When cases were brought before him, he referred them to a *panchayat* composed of five persons taken from this body,

<sup>1</sup> *Memoir of Central India* (1832), vol. i, p. 343.

<sup>2</sup> Brahmans with a special knowledge of the *Sastras*, or sacred books embodying Hindu law.

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.*, J. S. Cotton, *Mountstuart Elphinstone* (1892), pp. 142-3.



two being chosen by the plaintiff, two by the defendant, and the fifth by Forbes himself. By this means, he said, he had the satisfaction of pleasing 100,000 inhabitants of the city; in three years there was only one appeal against a decision. No court-fees were charged; no present was ever made to a member of a *panchayat*; and there were no lawyer's expenses. Advocates and pleaders did not exist and parties pleaded personally or through a relation or employee. Forbes had been an alderman and sheriff at Bombay and, having practised as a pleader for some years, had a knowledge of English law, but he remarked: 'Had I equalled Blackstone in knowledge of English law, it would have availed little among a people completely attached to their customs.'<sup>1</sup>

The *panchayats* were courts of arbitration rather than courts of law. They were convened with the consent of the parties, and there appears to have been no legal process to enforce the appearance of witnesses or defendants. Extra-legal methods were brought to bear when a man was unwilling to submit to their adjudication. These coercive measures were known either as *takaza*, i.e. dunning, or *dharna*, a practice by which supernatural terrors were invoked. If an aggrieved party wished to proceed against an equal or inferior, he resorted to peaceful picketing so as to prevent his adversary leaving his house or getting supplies of food until he paid the claim or agreed to have it settled by a *panchayat*. If the claim was against a superior, the aggrieved party made a nuisance of himself, lying down on the debtor's doorstep or on the roads and paths when he went out, proclaiming his grievances to all and sundry, and sometimes getting his friends to join in his demonstrations. As an alternative means of bringing pressure to bear, he resorted to *dharna*, i.e. he sat on the man's doorstep, or stood with a huge weight on his head, and fasted day and night, till a settlement was arrived at, it being an accepted principle that the debtor would be regarded as responsible for his death. Or he might simply call down the curses of the gods on the other man. These methods seldom failed in their object. If the demand was just, the man against whom they were directed made haste to come to terms; if unjust, he agreed to adjudication by a *panchayat*.<sup>2</sup> According to one account, if a man actually died while in *dharna*, the debtor's house was razed to the ground, and he and his family sold in satisfaction of the debt. The Maratha chiefs themselves were not exempt from pressure of this kind and were often put in duress by soldiers demanding arrears of pay. According to Tone, they might be said to spend nearly half their time in a state of *dharna*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Oriental Memoirs* (1834), vol. ii, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Sir E. Colebrooke, *Life of the Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone* (1884), vol. i, p. 87.

<sup>3</sup> *Asiatic Annual Register*, 1798-9, p. 138.

In the absence of any other means of obtaining redress, when the government and its officers were concerned, a whole village, caste, or trade would join in ceremonies at a temple, pouring water on the idols without ceasing, until they obtained satisfaction. Sometimes the practice of *kur* was resorted to in order to make government officers abandon inequitable demands, i.e. a pile of wood was erected, on which was placed a cow or a calf or an old woman, and it was announced that the pile would be set on fire unless the grievance was redressed; this was no idle threat but was sometimes put into execution. In West India a still more dreadful expedient was a practice, called *traga*, by which the Bhats killed themselves and one another in order to vindicate claims of right or privilege. The Bhats were hereditary bards or heralds, who performed peculiar functions and were held in veneration by the people. They guaranteed the safety of caravans, their presence with which was generally sufficient to ensure protection against attack. They also guaranteed the observance of treaties by princes and the fulfilment of bonds by private individuals; and they stood security to the Government for the payment of land revenue and the discharge of their duties by village head-men, zamindars, and farmers of revenue. A Bhat was ready to sacrifice his life in fulfilment of his guarantee. If there was a breach of the agreement, he killed himself or one of his family in the presence of the defaulting party, invoking the vengeance of the gods on him. The fear of responsibility for his death and of divine vengeance was generally so great as to prevent obligations being dishonoured. In recognition of their position as a privileged class the Bhats received stipends or assignments of land revenue free; and an attempt to assess them was followed by *traga*. Forbes himself was an eye-witness of a scene of mass-immolation which took place at Nariad in the Kaira district of Bombay in 1775, when he was attached to Raghoba's army. Although the town had been already plundered twice within three months, Raghoba demanded a further payment of Rs. 60,000 on threat of immediate pillage. The Bhats claimed their privilege of exemption and, when their protests were ignored, proceeded to commit *traga*, i.e. the whole body rushed forward with their women and children and set about killing one another until they were overpowered and disarmed.<sup>1</sup>

From this sketch of Maratha administration we may pass to a more detailed survey of the state of different parts of their dominions beginning with Orissa, which was conquered in 1803 after it had been for over half a century under the direct rule of the Bhonsla of Nagpur. Of its state at the end of that time we have a simple but graphic narrative by an aged Hindu ascetic, who came

<sup>1</sup> *Oriental Memoirs* (1834), vol. i, pp. 377-80; vol. ii, p. 278.



from Gujarat to Puri four or five years before the British conquest and lived there till 1867, when his statement was recorded. An eyewitness account by an Indian is so rare in Indian historical records that no apology is needed for taking it from the obscurity in which it has hitherto lingered and quoting it almost *in extenso*. The narrator stated that Raghuji, the Maratha Governor,

'used to come occasionally to Puri when he wanted money. He usually rode in at the head of his troops—about 1,500 fighting men, besides camp-followers, with a long train of elephants, horses, palanquins and carts. His chief object in coming was to gather money. For this purpose he held durbars, which he compelled all the great men in Puri to attend. I am not aware that he did anything at these durbars beyond making the great men pay him money. I never saw him distribute justice; but I have heard of his deciding cases of rich men against each other by taking the side of him who gave him most money. I never heard of him deciding points at dispute among the poor. A poor man would as soon have thought of drinking the ocean dry as of going to Raghuji to settle his disputes. I know of one case in which a man murdered another, and the relations of the murdered man caught the murderer and brought him before Raghuji to get him punished. Raghuji replied to them: "Why trouble me? If the man has murdered one of you, you can take his life yourselves, can't you, without troubling me?" Thieves and dacoits went everywhere, and Raghuji's camp-followers lived by plunder. They had no pay, but bad men used to struggle to become a camp-follower of Raghuji. To be one of his regular sepoy was to be a king. If an Oriya caught a thief in his house at night, he used to brand him by burning and then let him loose. Sometimes the villagers would rise and kill the thief outright. *Civil disputes were settled among the people themselves by panchayats.*<sup>1</sup>

'The Marathas collected the land revenue in this way. An underling of the Governor entered a village, called the people together, and ordered one man to give so many *pans* or *kahans* of cowries,<sup>2</sup> and another so many. If the people did not at once pay, they were first beaten with sticks, and if that would not do, they were afterwards tortured. A favourite mode of torture was to thrust a brass nail between the finger-nails and the flesh. . . . If the Marathas saw a man was fat, they said that he had eaten plenty of *ghi*<sup>3</sup> and must be wealthy—so all men tried to keep lean. If they saw any one wearing clean clothes, they declared he could afford to pay—so all people went about in dirty clothes. If they saw a man with a door to his house, they said it was plain he had something—so people either did not keep doors or hid them when the *amla*<sup>4</sup> was coming. Above all if a man lived in a masonry (*pakka*) house, he was sure to be fleeced. The Marathas held that a man who could build a *pakka* house, could always afford them Rs. 100. They had also another

<sup>1</sup> The italics are mine.

<sup>2</sup> The cowry shell was the current coin of Orissa both under Muslim and Maratha rule. A *pan* was 1,280 cowries and a *kahan* was equal to 16 *pans*. In 1877 it was estimated that 3 *pans* or 3,840 cowries went to one rupee.

<sup>3</sup> A form of butter.

<sup>4</sup> A revenue officer.

test to find out whether a man had money. They got together the leaves which serve as plates, and on which is served the family repast, and poured water over them; if this did not cover every part of the leaves, they declared that they were greasy and that the family were all *ghiceaters* and must be possessed of money. They used to enter houses, even the women's apartments, dig up the floors, probe the walls, and sometimes pull them down altogether, in search of money.

The Marathas made no roads or embankments; they never thought of doing either. There were roads in those days but not made ones. They were simply tracks across fields. The old road to Jagannath (Puri) was only a track and in the rains used to be covered with water up to my loins for miles. The number of pilgrims to Jagannath was much smaller in those days. The Marathas used systematically to plunder all the rich pilgrims on the road. The poor pilgrims too were often plundered and sometimes killed in the jungles by great bands of dacoits. Poor people, unless they were very pious, never thought of coming to Puri. When they did come, they always came in large bands for mutual protection. When rich men came, they travelled with a great company of soldiers armed with swords and spears and matchlocks. At that time there was not a single *pakha* house in the whole town of Puri. Even the wealthiest *maths*<sup>1</sup> were of wattle and dab. All round the temple, where now there are hundreds of wealthy shops, then there was only one. The town had not half the houses it has now. Jungle grew in the streets.<sup>2</sup>

This account speaks for itself. The only redeeming feature in the picture is that the village communities retained sufficient vitality to be able to settle their internal affairs. Otherwise there was a reign of violence and such a complete absence of civil government that one wonders how society kept together even in rural areas.

For the later stage of Maratha rule in western India we can scarcely have a better authority than James Forbes, to whom reference has already been made, for he served in Bombay, Baroda, and Gujarat from 1766 to 1784, saw the country both in peace and in war, in 1775 accompanied a Maratha army on the march, and from 1780 to 1783 was in charge of a district between two periods of Maratha administration. The misery of the people when war was raging was intense. Villages were burnt to the ground far and wide; in 1780, looking out from the walls of Dabhoi (in Baroda), Forbes saw over twenty in flames. The crops were cut and taken away by marauding parties; the villagers were carried off to work for the armies 'like beasts of burden; those who escaped had to seek protection under the walls of cities, where they huddled together in misery and destitution.'<sup>3</sup> As already stated, however,

<sup>1</sup> Hindu monasteries.

<sup>2</sup> W. W. Hunter, *Statistical Account of Bengal* (1877), vol. xviii, pp. 194-6.

<sup>3</sup> Similar scenes were witnessed in Madras by Warren Hastings, who saw 'the wretched inhabitants of the Carnatic of every age, sex, and condition tumultuously thronging round the walls of Fort St. George, and lying for many successive days and nights on the burning soil, without covering or food on a false



the Maratha armies only took the field during the dry season. The land had respite in the rains, and sometimes a whole village could escape in good time. One instance of this is recorded. In 1781 some 3,000 people took refuge on an island in a river near Surat, bringing with them all their worldly possessions, their cattle, stock of grain, looms, spinning wheels, and little scraps of furniture. The island was to be an asylum till the monsoon when the Maratha army would leave and they could return home, but unfortunately they were all drowned when the river rose suddenly one night in flood.

The towns were ransacked by the armies which marched and counter-marched across the country. Houses were stripped of movable property, and their owners made to give up their last mite and tortured if they were suspected of having hidden hoards. A Maratha army was followed by swarms of licensed plunderers, who shared their spoils with the commanders of the corps to which they were attached. Armed with swords and spears, hatchets and crowbars they entered places which had already been visited by the troops and deserted by their inhabitants, stripped the houses of their locks, hinges, iron-work and timber, dug up the floors and demolished the walls in search of any possible cache, and finally set fire to what they could not carry away. These were the Pindaris, who in the last days of Maratha rule, when organized in great hordes, were the scourge of the country.

The Maratha armies were not the only foes to be feared. Marauding bands of Kathis and Kolis from Kathiawar swept in on the land along its borders, where cultivation flourished only near the towns. Elsewhere the fields were either deserted or tilled under the protection of armed guards, with sentinels posted in the highest trees; as soon as an alarm was given the herds were hurriedly driven into the villages, which were defended by mud forts or impenetrable hedges. Other villages suffered from the raids of wild Bhils and the depredations of Garasias, the latter led by chiefs who were not mere caterans, but ruled their territories with the aid of a staff of ministers and State officers. The Marathas did, however, protect the people against their attacks; detachments of cavalry patrolled the country and destroyed both Bhils and Garasias as if they were wild beasts. It must also be put down to their credit that they protected and did not molest the Banjaras, carriers who travelled from one end of India to the other with thousands of oxen laden with grain, salt, cotton goods, &c., followed by a motley train of musicians, jugglers, dancing bears, and performing monkeys.

In describing the conditions of life in peace-time Forbes found it painful to enlarge on the distress and misery caused by oppression.

'The country is subjected to a general system of tyranny. From the greatest chieftains and nobles of the realm to the humblest peasant in a village, neither the property nor the life of a subject could be called his own, and all bow to the iron sceptre, having no law to protect them from oppression, no clement sovereign to redress their grievances.'

'A system of oppression prevails from the throne to the zamindar, whom I have frequently heard give the order for a *patel* or head farmer to be flogged unmercifully as representative of the village he was ruining by his extortions.'<sup>1</sup>

Whole villages emigrated in the hope of finding a milder form of government, but this must have been only occasional, for Forbes states elsewhere that, heavy as was the demand, great as were the exactions, sufficient was generally left to the agriculturists, with their few wants, to remain in their villages and cultivate their fields.

Neither manufactures nor industries were fostered and the urban classes were depressed. Ahmadabad, formerly the seat of a splendid court, a city enriched by commerce and peopled by industry, was reduced to decay by long years of war and exaction. The adjoining district, once flourishing and delightful, was almost a desert and thousands of its inhabitants left it every year to seek protection elsewhere. Bombay benefited by the exodus, the displaced merchants finding there security for themselves and protection for their property under the British flag. Both the fine and the applied arts were neglected. For want of patronage painters, jewellers, embroiderers, inlayers of ivory, ebony, and sandalwood, migrated to Surat and other places. Surat was also an asylum for learned Muslims, whose literature, art, and science met with no encouragement from the Maratha rulers. Unlike the Mughals the Marathas were neither patrons of art nor great builders; nor were they respecters of old buildings. They erected few monuments and they allowed those which were in existence to fall into decay or disuse. Few of the caravanserais, which had been built by the Mughals in the cities and along the roads, often with a mosque and a garden attached to them, were kept up and used for their original purpose. Some were converted into fortresses and others used as storehouses for grain and hay; but most were in a state of dilapidation. There were worse cases of vandalism. In Ahmadabad there was 'the most heterogeneous mixture of Mughal splendour and Mahratta barbarism; a noble cupola overshadowing hovels of mud; small windows, ill-fashioned doors, and dirty cells introduced

<sup>1</sup> *Oriental Memoirs* (1834), vol. i, p. 113; vol. ii, p. 52.



under a superb portico; a marble corridor piled up with cooking places composed of mud, cow-dung, and unburnt bricks'.<sup>1</sup>

The general gloom of this picture is relieved by pleasing glimpses of village life, of its patriarchal simplicity, its simple pleasures, such as the visits of itinerant snake-charmers and jugglers, its ready hospitality to strangers, and its charity to the poor. The produce of lands set aside for communal purposes supported the lame, the blind, and the helpless as well as village servants and Brahmans. Brahmans sometimes had whole villages appropriated to them, as also had dancing girls. The former pursued their Sanskritic studies undisturbed in the seclusion of temples and groves. Children received an elementary education in village schools, simple sheds with a sanded floor, on which they traced their letters. At Poona a Brahman censor had high authority, imposing fines for lapses from Brahmanical standards among the higher castes, composing family quarrels, and taking measures to enforce total abstinence. Prohibition was in force in the Deccan, but distilling was allowed in the Konkan, where there was no ban on liquor except among Brahmans. The slaughter of cows and their exposure for sale were prohibited. Suttee was practised, widows being burnt, and in some cases buried alive, with the bodies of their husbands.

A brief reference may be made to the state of yet one more portion of the Maratha dominions, viz. the Sagar and Narbada territories (now included in the Central Provinces) before their annexation in 1818. The shrinkage of revenue due to the loss of territory after the second Maratha war had its natural reaction on the system of government, which became increasingly exacting and oppressive in its endeavours to make up the deficit. On one occasion the peasants in Jubbulpore even appealed to the Pindaris against their Maratha governor, only to find that they had exchanged King Log for King Stork, for the Pindaris plundered them mercilessly, desecrated the temples, and defaced the images. In 1829 Sir William Sleeman found that in this district one thousand villages (about one-fifth of the total) which had formerly been occupied were entirely deserted.<sup>2</sup> All sorts of shifts were resorted to by the Marathas to raise money. One man, for example, was fined Rs. 3,000 (about £300) for building a large house, another double that sum for building temples and excavating tanks. A subtle means of extracting money was the establishment of adultery courts equipped with a staff of false witnesses. A trial was a foregone conclusion for a wealthy man, who was promptly convicted and sentenced to a fine; if recalcitrant, he was put in the stocks

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official* (1893), vol. ii, p. 91.

until his relatives came to the rescue with the money required. The landholders in one area purchased exemption from this inquisition by paying Rs. 25,000, which they raised by levying a cess of 25 per cent. on the revenue, with the result that this became a permanent charge added to the assessment. Widows were sold for the benefit of the exchequer, and on the occasion of a marriage the parents of a bride were mulcted of one-fourth of the price they received for her. One of the first questions which the Maratha officials called on the newly appointed British administrators in the Narbada territory to decide was whether these practices should continue. As for other taxes and cesses their name was legion.

'No horses or slaves or cattle could be sold, no cloth could be stamped, no money could be changed, even prayers for rain could not be offered, without paying on each operation its special and peculiar tax. In short, a poor man could not shelter himself, or clothe himself, or earn his bread, or eat it, or marry, or rejoice, or even ask his gods for better weather, without contributing separately on each individual act to the necessities of the State.'<sup>1</sup>

In Assam the British came into contact with a more primitive form of society. The most advanced area was Sylhet, which had been part of the Mughal empire and passed into British hands with Bengal; but comparatively advanced as it was, cowry shells constituted the currency until 1820, some seven hundred million being received annually in payment of the land revenue and remitted to Calcutta. Its borders had to be defended against the raids of hill tribes and its fields against the ravages of wild elephants; some tribes built huts in the trees in order to escape from beasts of prey, and lived on wild honey and the fruits of the forest. The greater part of the province, comprising the Brahmaputra valley, was conquered in 1826 from the Burmese, who had oppressed it for ten years and, when driven out, carried off 30,000 persons as slaves. Here barbarous penalties were inflicted on criminals, who were liable to have red-hot irons applied to their bodies, to have their limbs, noses, ears, and lips cut off, their eyes gouged out, and their hair torn off, to be ground to death between wooden cylinders, and to be sawn asunder. Outlying areas were annexed later in consequence of raids by wild hill tribes seeking either plunder, or captives to work as slaves or meet a scarcity of women, or heads to grace marriage feasts and the obsequies of chiefs.

In the Punjab order had to be re-established in a society which had been racked by years of civil strife after the death of Ranjit Singh, who had set up a stable government and put an end to the anarchy which prevailed during the second half of the eighteenth century when the Punjab was a cockpit of war. The general

<sup>1</sup> C. Grant, *Gazetteer of the Central Provinces* (1870), pp. xcix-cl.



character of his rule is epitomized in the conclusions which Sir Richard Temple drew from the study which he made of it at a time when the memory of it was still fresh and evidence on every point was available. It was as bad as it dared to be with such a people as the Punjabis, who would rebel and fight 'with grenadier-like force' if provoked too far. It was just that and no worse. It took no thought for judgement and justice—that was relegated to feudatories, who were however men of the country, locally respected or feared, and would not carry things too far. At the same time the Sikh sovereignty, considered only as a political and military institution, was popular, being the symbol of a national faith victorious by force of arms.<sup>1</sup> So severely were the agricultural classes taxed to meet the cost of the court, the army, and numerous campaigns, that the profits of cultivation disappeared, and the possession of land was regarded as merely a liability. Although, however, the rural masses paid for the army, they were helped by it. Every village contributed recruits, who remitted their savings to their homes. Many a village paid half its land revenue from these additions to its resources. Peculation was rife; the records of 180 villages which were examined after the annexation showed that ordinarily only half, and in some cases only one-third, of the revenue reached the treasury. An idea of the general state of the country as compared with British India may be gathered from the words of Jacquemont, who travelled through it and was *persona grata* with Ranjit Singh himself. 'One must have travelled to the Punjab to know what an immense benefit to humanity the English dominion in India is and what miseries it spares millions of people. In the Punjab there is an enormous population who subsist only by their guns.' It was, he wrote in 1831, only after he had seen the state of the people in independent territories that he fully appreciated the blessings of British rule. The countries outside its perimeter were 'a theatre of atrocious violence and of continued murder and robbery'.<sup>2</sup>

Here too, as in Maratha territories, vandalism was common. One of the first British administrators wrote: 'Ranjit Singh and his followers seem only to have conquered to destroy; every public work, every castle, road, serai or avenue has been destroyed; the finest mosques turned into powder magazines and stables, the gardens into cantonments, and the fields into deserts.'<sup>3</sup> The desolation referred to in the concluding words should be ascribed not so much to Ranjit Singh's rule or his wars as to the strife

<sup>1</sup> H. Pearce, *Memoirs of Alexander Gardner* (1897), pp. xxv-xxvi.

<sup>2</sup> V. Jacquemont, *Letters from India, describing a journey in the British dominions of India, Tibet, Lahore, and Cashmere* (1834), vol. ii, pp. 52, 90-1.

<sup>3</sup> G. H. Hodson, *Twelve Years of a Soldier's Life in India* (1839), p. 54.

which broke out after his death. There was chronic revolution and disorder, and the civil and social systems were threatened with dissolution. The army became the real ruler; the soldiers governed themselves and their officers by a kind of soviet chosen from the ranks, and rioted at will. The village communities began to break up and large areas went out of cultivation. Even as early as 1841, only two years after the death of Ranjit Singh, Sir Henry Lawrence, when travelling through the Punjab, was struck by the almost entire absence of inhabitants for seventy miles on end. Some parts were a wild waste, others had little or no cultivation. Roads there were none. With little exception the country was most desolate.<sup>1</sup> Education, however, was not neglected. On annexation it was found that there were elementary schools throughout the Punjab, to which in some districts the children of all communities and classes resorted, though in others the agricultural classes held aloof and the only pupils were members of the higher castes, who had a tradition of learning, or of the mercantile classes, to whom a knowledge of letters and accounts was a necessity. There were even small schools for girls; sixteen were in existence in Lahore, their pupils being all Muslims.

The last great block of territory to be annexed was Oudh, which for about half a century had suffered from gross misgovernment. Lord William Bentinck had found it a scene of desolation and decay and warned the king in 1831 that the government would be taken out of his hands unless he reformed. A brief improvement was effected by a Persian minister, but matters went from bad to worse and culminated in anarchy. Oudh became, in Dalhousie's words, a fortress of corruption and infamous misgovernment. It was devastated by private war waged by great landholders called *talukdars*, and sometimes known as the barons of Oudh, who, like the old robber barons, terrorized the country round their strongholds. The resultant reign of terror is graphically described in Sir William Sleeman's *Journey through the Kingdom of Oude in 1849-50*. It is usual to assume that this work is widely known, but actually it is now read by so few that a brief extract may be permitted in order to indicate the state of lawlessness to which Oudh had been reduced.

"The talookdars keep the country in a perpetual state of disturbance and render life, property, and industry everywhere insecure. Whenever they quarrel with each other or with the local authorities of the Government, from whatever cause, they take to indiscriminate plunder and murder over all lands not held by men of the same class; no road, town, village or hamlet is secure from their merciless attacks; robbery and murder become their diversion—their sport; and they think no more of

<sup>1</sup> H. B. Edwardes and H. Merivale, *Life of Sir Henry Lawrence* (1872), p. 202.



taking the lives of men, women and children who never offended them than those of deer and wild hog. They not only rob and murder but seize, confine, and torture all whom they seize and suppose to have money or credit till they ransom themselves with all they have or can beg or borrow. Hardly a day has passed since I left Lucknow in which I have not had abundant proof of numerous atrocities of this kind committed by landholders, within the district through which I was passing, year by year up to the present day. The same system is followed by landholders of smaller degrees and of this military class.<sup>1</sup>

From the preceding sketch of conditions in different parts of India it may fairly be deduced that after the Mughal empire broke up it was a most distressed country. As in the days before the Flood in Adam's vision:

'Violence

Proceeded, and oppression, and sword-law,  
Through all the plain, and refuge none was found'.

Material force was the supreme arbiter. The bonds of law and order had been relaxed or broken to such an extent that Macaulay can scarcely be said to have used the language of hyperbole when, speaking in the House of Commons in 1833, he referred to a great, a stupendous, process, the reconstruction of a decomposed society which knew nothing of government but its exactions.<sup>2</sup> Conditions were altogether abnormal owing to the collapse of the structure of government built up by the Mughals. Their empire had destroyed indigenous forms of polity in the territories under their direct rule; the chiefs with powers of varying degrees, who had intervened between the sovereign and his subjects, had been stripped of authority; the land, as Sir Alfred Lyall remarked, had been levelled flat by the steam-roller of absolutism.<sup>3</sup> When the empire fell there was no organized system of government to take its place. Satrapies were converted into kingdoms and new principalities were carved out, but political equilibrium had not been attained before the British assumed control. In the meantime wide territories were reduced to a state for which parallels may be found in the condition of Germany during the Thirty Years War<sup>4</sup> and even more perhaps in that of China after 1911, when the

<sup>1</sup> Edition of 1838, vol. i, pp. 322-3. Sir William Sleeman was Resident at Lucknow from 1840 to 1851.

<sup>2</sup> A. B. Keith, *Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy, 1750-1921* (1922), vol. i, p. 244.

<sup>3</sup> *The Rise of the British Dominion in India* (1893), p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> The following account given by Dr. Fisher might well be applied to India. 'It would be impossible to exaggerate the miseries which the helpless peasants were compelled to endure in those iron times. There was marauding, there was starvation, there was even cannibalism. Whole villages died out, and, as is always the case in times of distress and desperate calamity, moral restraints broke down.' *History of Europe* (1936), p. 611.

Manchu empire broke up and the greater part of the country was at the mercy of contending war-lords, rebels, and bandits. It seemed at one time as if the Marathas might take the place of the Mughals in north and central India, but, though they pulled down the Mughal empire, they had not sufficient cohesion and constructive ability to build another in its place. They proved unable to achieve a solid union or to evolve a centralized system of government, and by the first quarter of the nineteenth century their control was so ineffective that wide territories were overrun by the hordes of banditti known as Pindaris, who represented no nationality, were independent of any government, and had no political or civil responsibility.

It would be a mistake to assume that the forms of government disappeared. They still existed but were made the instruments of arbitrary power and oppression. Moreover the social system did not collapse and culture was not destroyed. The institutions which governed personal relations, such as the joint family and the caste system, were not affected by wars and revolutions, and they continued to regulate the internal life of Hindu society in the midst of tumult and strife. Unless, as sometimes happened, villages were exterminated or abandoned, the communal form of organization represented by the village community still functioned,<sup>1</sup> though its solidarity was often impaired by its members taking advantage of the general disorder to fight each for his own hand. Owing to the tenacity with which the peasantry cling to their land and landed rights, the agrarian system, though thrown out of gear, was not broken up; in India village rights remain when kingdoms pass away. Those who fled before the storm returned when there was a measure of peace and security, rebuilt their houses, reclaimed the village lands and re-established the proprietary shares which had existed before their dispossession. There was undoubtedly economic deterioration, but, despite the disorder caused by war and misgovernment, trade and industry continued on a scale sufficient to make India the objective of European commercial enterprise. Though its flame flickered and burnt low, culture was not extinguished. There were not wanting men to hand on the torch of learning, nor were they without patrons. Literature was decadent but not dead. Maharaja Jai Singh (1686-1743) devoted himself to astronomy, induced the king of

<sup>1</sup> Here again China affords a close parallel. According to General and Madam Chang Kai-shek, 'there was a time not so many years ago—after the establishment of the republic—when China was without a President, a Premier, or Parliament for several weeks. But everything proceeded as if nothing had happened because the people went about their business without question, looking always to the heads of their clans in family affairs and to their elders in affairs of their towns and villages.' *China at the Cross-Roads* (1937), p. 21.



Portugal to send out a Portuguese astronomer to advise him, and established observatories at Delhi, Benares, Mathura, and Ujjain. In the middle of the eighteenth century Raja Krishna Chandra Rai of Nadia in Bengal gathered round him a circle of scholars and poets, of whom one, Bharat Chandra Rai, is held by his countrymen to be worthy to rank with Pope and Dryden. Even in the welter of war, schools of Urdu poets flourished at Delhi and Lucknow during the second half of the same century; Nadia and Benares were centres of Sanskrit learning, at which Brahman pandits pursued their studies in the seclusion of their seminaries. Schools of philosophy survived at both these places and at Madura, which was a focus of Tamil as well as Sanskrit learning. In this and other ways an ethos was maintained which was free from the subversive forces of new ideas and alien systems, and continuity with the past was preserved.

## CHAPTER II

### THE IMPACT OF EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION

A NEW epoch in the history of India may be said to have begun in 1498, when Vasco da Gama's three little ships cast anchor off Calicut. The sea-route to India had been discovered, and India was brought into contact with modern European civilization, first by the Portuguese and then by other nations which followed them. It is related that when the Portuguese first landed at Calicut, one of them was asked what they had come for and replied; 'We have come to seek Christians and spices.' The answer was a succinct definition of the two objects which the Portuguese had in view, one missionary and the other commercial. They were at once crusaders aiming at the propagation of the Christian faith, and merchant adventurers, whose goal was the control of the sea-borne trade of India, of which the trade in spices was an important part. Both objects were promoted by peaceful suasion and negotiation, but the Portuguese relied still more on the power of the sword. The Governor of Goa said in 1545 that they came to India with a crucifix in one hand and a sword in the other, and the spirit of their rule seems to be typified by a figure sculptured on the Viceroy's arch at Goa, that of a saint whose foot is on the neck of a prostrate Indian and whose hand holds a drawn sword pointing towards India.

The Portuguese succeeded in realizing their mercantile ambitions by means of naval power. They commanded the sea-routes and dominated the sea-borne trade throughout the sixteenth century. Their settlements along the western sea-board were not merely trading stations but also fortified naval bases, in which they exercised sovereign powers. The Mughals had no sea power and the fleets of the Portuguese swept the sea. No ships could proceed on their lawful occasions without passes or licences issued by them; even Akbar had to have authorization for ships which he sent to the Red Sea. Conquest on land was limited to the acquisition of sea-ports and their adjoining territory. The same object was gained by negotiations with Hindu princes, treaties with whom provided for the grant of sites for ports and the recognition of the sovereignty of Portugal. The Portuguese territories were intended to be outposts of their empire and their religion; their law and manners were to be imposed on the inhabitants. Colonization was effected not so much by immigration as by marriages with Indian women. There was no colour bar, and the children of mixed marriages were under no stigma of inferiority. The Muslims, as



in Europe, were treated as natural enemies of a Christian power, but under Albuquerque tolerance was shown to Hindus, though some of their customs were abolished, suttee being prohibited by Albuquerque and infanticide, which was prevalent near Calicut, by his successor. Schools were opened for their education; the village communities were preserved. The equitable rule of Albuquerque himself (1509-15) was long remembered by the people of Goa, who, when oppressed by later governors, used to gather at his tomb, make offerings of flowers and of oil for the lamp which was kept burning on it, and pray that he would see that justice was done them.<sup>1</sup> From Tavernier, who visited Goa in 1641 and again in 1648, we learn that the people of the country were kept in subjection and none admitted to office except as law-agents, solicitors, and scribes. If any of them struck a white man or European, 'there was no pardon, and he had to have his hand cut off'. As legal practitioners, however, they must have had considerable influence, for, according to him, trials were in their hands and were interminable, there being 'no people in the world more cunning and subtle'.<sup>2</sup>

Proselytization began soon after the capture of Goa and persecution in 1540, under the orders of the fanatical John III. At the same time the spread of Christianity was to be assisted by an appeal to material interests. Converts were to be provided with posts in the customs, exempted from impressment in the navy, and supported by the distribution of rice—the first record of what have been called 'rice-Christians'. In 1560 the Inquisition was introduced and an officer of that body was posted in each of the Portuguese towns with power to arrest any person who said or did anything opposed to the Catholic faith, and to send him to Goa, where he was tried by the Inquisitor General.<sup>3</sup> Seventy-three *autos-da-fe* took place between 1600 and 1773,<sup>4</sup> and the Indian population cannot but have been struck by the incongruity of a religion which imprisoned, tortured, and condemned to the flames those whose only crime was unorthodoxy or the profession of a heretical creed,<sup>5</sup> but prevented widows being burnt of their own free will as an act of sublime virtue. Nor could an unfavourable impression fail to be created by the prolonged persecution to which the Portuguese subjected the Syrian Christians, in order to

<sup>1</sup> H. Morse Stephens, *Albuquerque* (1892), pp. 144, 159.

<sup>2</sup> V. Ball, *Travels in India by Jean Baptiste Tavernier* (1889), vol. i, pp. 189, 194.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.

<sup>4</sup> The Inquisition was suspended in 1774, reintroduced after four years, and abolished in 1812.

<sup>5</sup> A Hindu, it has been observed, cannot conceive the possibility of a rational being pursuing and destroying his fellow creature merely to establish a speculative point of doctrine. W. H. Tone, 'Illustrations of some Institutions of the Mahratta People', *Asiatic Annual Register*, 1798-9, Miscellaneous Tracts, p. 127.

force them to abandon the doctrines of Nestorianism and to enter the Roman Catholic Church. The Muslims were inevitably struck by the contrast between the unity of Islam and the disunity of Christendom, the Hindus by the contrast between the intolerance of the Portuguese and the tolerance of their own princes, who had allowed the Syrian Christians the free exercise of their religion and given them high status as a military caste. Bigotry and persecution drove away inhabitants, and it was observed in the second half of the eighteenth century that many districts near Goa had been almost depopulated, those who used to live in them having migrated to Malabar in order to escape forcible conversion.<sup>1</sup>

The Portuguese settlements in the north-east of India were in a different position from those on the west coast, being filled with adventurers who were under no effective control. They were practically independent, and the Viceroy of Goa on one occasion informed Shah Jahan that they were not under his jurisdiction. The principal settlement was at Hooghly, which, we are told by Manrique, himself a Portuguese, attracted many Christians of Indian as well as Portuguese birth, 'but these people were generally indigent, most of the Portuguese being highway robbers and men of loose lives'.<sup>2</sup> At Chittagong and other places they subsisted chiefly by piracy and slave raids. Manucci, after stating that they carried off as slaves men, women, children, and even babes at the breast, roundly declared that they were unworthy of the name not merely of Christians but of men.<sup>3</sup> Their captives and those of the Maghs, or Arakanese, with whom they were in league, were taken to Hooghly and sold in the slave-market there. Shah Jahan was roused to action by the enslavement of Muslims and by the Portuguese practice of taking orphan children, with their property, and bringing them up as Christians—a practice which the Muslim historian Khafi Khan said was 'of all their odious practices the worst'. Hooghly was destroyed in 1632 and the Portuguese power in Bengal never revived. By this time the command of the sea had been wrested from them by the Dutch, and in 1648 Portugal was forced to sign a treaty by which its possessions in India were restricted to Goa with a hinterland of 1,300 square miles, Daman with about 150 square miles on the coast north of Bombay, and the island of Diu off the coast of Kathiawar. So completely were their power and fame eclipsed that about twenty years later Bernier described them as wretched, poor, and despised, whereas, according to him, their name had formerly been a tower of strength.<sup>4</sup>

The advent of the Portuguese was of far-reaching importance

<sup>1</sup> J. Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs* (1832), vol. i, pp. 190-1.

<sup>2</sup> C. E. Luard, *Fray Sebastian Manrique, 1629-1643* (1927), vol. i, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> W. Irvine, *Storia di Mogor* (1907), vol. i, p. 371.

<sup>4</sup> *Travels in the Mogul Empire* (1891), p. 196.



not only because it established direct communication with Europe, but also because of its political consequences. They were pioneers along a road which was followed by other European nations and which, in the case of the English, eventually led to empire. Their chief achievements in other directions were the establishment of naval power, hitherto unknown, in Indian seas; the development of sea-borne trade, for which new markets were opened; the addition of a race of half-castes to the peoples of India; the introduction of the Roman Catholic form of Christianity in their own territories and its propagation inland by means of missionaries. Except, however, for missions the range of Portuguese influence was limited by the extent of their territorial possessions. So far as India was concerned, they were a littoral people; their possessions, with the exception of Hooghly, were strung along the coast and did not form compact blocks of territory; and they were not in a position to affect the life of the people inland. The Portuguese language contributed many words to the vocabularies of Indian languages, and a bastard form of it was for a long time a *lingua franca* in the sea-ports and European settlements along the coast. Both the Dutch and English in the seventeenth century had to employ Portuguese interpreters. It was the language in which the English Chief at Tellicherry corresponded with the Dutch Commodore at Cochin and the French at Mahe,<sup>1</sup> and in which, even as late as 1828, the Indian commandant of the little Danish settlement at Serampore submitted his daily report to its Norwegian Governor. It was long a medium of conversation between Europeans and their servants and was commonly used by Lord Clive, who was never proficient in any Indian vernacular but had picked up a knowledge of Portuguese in Brazil, where he spent nine months on his first voyage out to India.

Of other Portuguese importations one calls for notice, viz. tobacco, which effected a revolution in social habits. The tobacco plant was introduced early in the seventeenth century and quickly became acclimatized. The use of the leaf for smoking spread so rapidly that Shah Jahan issued an edict prohibiting tobacco smoking on the ground that it had had 'a very bad effect upon the health and mind of many persons', but his orders had no more effect than the fulminations of James I. According to a Persian writer of the seventeenth century:

"The culture of the plant became speedily almost universal within a short period after its introduction into Hindustan and the produce of it rewarded the cultivator far beyond every other article of husbandry. This became more especially the case in the reign of Shah Jahan, when

<sup>1</sup> "The Dutch in Malabar", *Calcutta Review*, 1909, p. 545. A Portuguese patois is said to be still spoken at Cochin.

the practice of smoking pervaded all classes and ranks within the empire. Nobles and beggars, pious and wicked, devotees and free-thinkers, poets, historians, rhetoricians, doctors and patients, high and low, rich and poor, all seemed intoxicated with a decided preference for it over every other luxury, nay, often over the necessities of life. To a stranger no offering was so acceptable as a whiff, and to a friend one could produce nothing half so grateful as a *chillum*.<sup>1</sup> So rooted was the habit that a confirmed smoker would abstain from food and drink rather than relinquish the gratification he derived from inhaling the fumes of this deleterious plant.<sup>2</sup>

Although, however, he called tobacco deleterious, the writer must have been a smoker himself, for he proceeded to wax lyrical in its praise. The hookah, he said, was a most pleasing companion whether to the way-worn traveller or to the solitary hermit. It was a friend, a counsellor, and an ornament of the house.

"The music of its sound<sup>3</sup> puts the warbling of the nightingale to shame and the fragrance of its perfume brings a blush on the cheek of the rose. Life in short is prolonged by the fumes inhaled at each inspiration, whilst every expiration of them is accompanied with ecstasitic delight."<sup>4</sup>

The policy of the Dutch was more strictly commercial than that of the Portuguese. Like the latter they realized that factories, i.e. trade depots, had to be defended by forts, but their objective was command of trade and not territorial dominion and political power. They had, moreover, no desire to impose their creed or customs on the people with whom they had commercial relations. They had little missionary enterprise; there was, it is true, a staff of predicants, but these were expected to convert Roman Catholics into Protestants rather than to proselytize Hindus and Muslims. They did not attempt to colonize though the question was seriously debated. Those in favour of colonization pointed out that mixed colonies of Dutchmen and half-castes would help in the defence of their settlements and save the cost of bringing soldiers from Holland to serve as garrisons. Its opponents objected that colonists would have to be given the privileges of trade in order to support themselves, and that poor colonists would be a burden to the Company and a discredit to the nation, while the experience of the Portuguese showed that half-castes were of little military value.<sup>5</sup>

They remained a people apart, and in any case their settlements were too few and too scattered to affect any but the people in their vicinity. Their chief contribution to Indian history was political,

<sup>1</sup> The bowl of a hookah.

<sup>2</sup> The gurgle of a hookah or hubble-bubble is presumably referred to.

<sup>3</sup> H. Yule and A. C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson* (1903), p. 926.

<sup>4</sup> See A. Galletti, Rev. A. J. Van Der Burg, and Rev. P. Groot, "The Dutch in Malabar", *Calcutta Review*, 1909, pp. 346-7.



for it was from them that the English learnt lessons of policy which helped them to territorial sovereignty. These were briefly that the factory must pay its way, that it must be capable of defence against attack, and that for this purpose it must be protected by a fort and have an adjacent terrain. The result is summed up in the words of Lord Palmerston, viz., 'The original settlers began with a factory, the factory grew into a fort, the fort expanded into a district, and the district into a province.'<sup>1</sup>

The French contribution to India again was mainly political and of more value to the English than to the people of India. It was one partly of policy, partly of military organization. They led the way in making alliances with Indian powers; they were the first Europeans to train Indian soldiers on a large scale in European methods of warfare, to win wars with their assistance, and to march armies away from the coast and strike far inland. Although they established a hegemony over a large territory in South India, the period of their ascendancy was too brief to have any lasting effect on the social complex, for it began with the government of Pondicherry by Dupleix in 1741 and came to an end with its capture twenty years later. There is now only an occasional reminiscence of their presence as, for instance, when Sir Mountstuart Grant-Duff, Governor of Madras (1881-6), found nautch-girls at Vizagapatam dancing to the tune of *Malbrook s'en va-t-en guerre*, which had been learnt from the French soldiers of Bussy after their capture of the town in 1757.

In the last decade of the eighteenth century there was a revival of French political influence, and the French Revolution had repercussions which are more curious than important. Tipu Sultan of Mysore, who entered into an alliance with the French and was called Citoyen Tipu by them, planted the tree of liberty at Seringapatam and was elected a member of a Jacobin club. The troops of Raymond, the French general of the Nizam of Hyderabad, had the cap of liberty stamped on the buttons of their uniform and went to battle with the French tricolor flying above them; this force, according to Sir John Malcolm, who disbanded it in 1798, was a nest of democrats. After 1761 the French reputation was sustained mainly by the personal influence of soldiers of fortune serving under Indian princes, such as Raymond and de Boigne. The latter was not only a capable general, under Mahadji Sindhia, in command of 40,000 troops, whose banners bore the device of the white cross of Savoy, de Boigne's home. He was also an enlightened administrator, maintaining civilized standards in the territory which he governed in the Doab and made an oasis in

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Keith, *Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy, 1750-1921* (1922), vol. i, p. 321.

a desert of misrule. A contemporary British account affirmed that he softened the ferocious character of the Marathas who served under him to such an extent that the rapacious licence which had been common among them came to be looked upon as infamous even by the meanest soldier;<sup>1</sup> more than half a century after he left India for his native country, he was said to have left an imperishable name in the north-west of India both as a civil governor and military commander.<sup>2</sup> He and other Frenchmen ingratiated themselves with the people by their courtesy and geniality. Bishop Heber, who made inquiries in 1825 as to the estimation in which they were held, found that, though they were regarded as often oppressive and avaricious, their freedom from that exclusive spirit which made the English a caste by themselves ensured their popularity, and that the free and friendly intercourse which they maintained with Indians of rank was still regretted.<sup>3</sup>

The contact with the people which was effected by missionary enterprise was in many ways closer and more intimate than that of merchants and soldiers, as was only natural when the object was conversion to another faith. Three great Christian missions came into the field, the Portuguese mission in the sixteenth, the Madura mission in the seventeenth, and the Danish mission in the eighteenth. The first comers were Franciscans and Dominicans, but no great progress was made till the advent in 1542 of the saintly and devoted Francis Xavier, whose ascetic habits appealed to Indian sentiment, which associates holiness with abnegation of physical comforts. There appears to have been a mass movement to Christianity among the fishermen along the south-west and south-east coasts, where he chiefly laboured, but it may be doubted whether the converts were acquainted with anything but the rudiments of the Christian faith, for Xavier was ignorant of Indian languages and merely memorized the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Ave Maria, which the people repeated after him. After a time he himself appears to have despaired of any success commensurate with his hopes and left for Japan, saying that to ask people to become Christians was like asking them to submit to death. Jesuit missionaries followed Francis Xavier in growing numbers, and their propaganda became active and effectual, partly no doubt because they were backed by secular authority and partly because they adapted themselves to the country, becoming 'Indians in all secular matters, dress, food, &c.'<sup>4</sup> Churches and congregations of Indian Christians sprang up in the

<sup>1</sup> See G. B. Malletson, *Final French Struggles in India* (1878), pp. 188-9.

<sup>2</sup> C. Raikes, *Notes on the North-Western Provinces of India* (1852), p. 177.

<sup>3</sup> *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India* (1849), vol. ii, pp. 11, 222.

<sup>4</sup> Sir W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Empire* (1893), p. 296.



Portuguese territories, and between 1557 and 1610 dioceses were established at Cochin, Mailapur or S. Thomé, and Cranganore. Jesuit missionaries made their way to Bengal, and to the court both of Akbar, who took an academic interest in their doctrines, and of Jahangir, during whose reign a college and a church were established at Agra, while some of the princes are said to have embraced Christianity. As in other countries, the Jesuits were distinguished for their educational work. Education was regarded as one of the instruments of conversion, and formed a *praeparatio evangelica*, being designed for the training of priests, for their church was to be an Indian church supplying its own staff. As Sir William Hunter has said, the keynote of their policy was: 'The Christian religion cannot be regarded as naturalized in a country until it is in a position to propagate its own priesthood.'<sup>1</sup> Schools were set up in towns and villages. There was a splendid college at Goa and another at Cochin with two grammar schools, at which 260 boys were being taught in 1570. Industrial training was not neglected; arts and crafts were taught as well as the letters and the tenets of the Christian faith.

The Madura mission, which was founded in 1606 by Robert de Nobili, an Italian and a nephew of Cardinal Bellarmine, worked in Madura, Trichinopoly, Tanjore, Tinnevely, and Salem for a century and a half. It initiated a new line of missionary attack, for it dissociated itself from the civil power, and carried on its labours in territories outside Portuguese jurisdiction, where it could count on no protection. Its members, forsaking all for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, adapted themselves to Indian customs and habits of life, in order to attract converts. One of them explained that their whole attention had to be given to concealing the fact that they were Firingis, i.e. Europeans, as the slightest suspicion of this on the part of the people would be an insurmountable obstacle to the propagation of the Gospel. Christianity seems to have already acquired an evil reputation from the conduct of European laymen. An English clergyman, Mr. Terry, was told in 1616: 'Christian religion devil religion; Christian much drink; Christian much do wrong; Christian much beat; Christian much abuse others', while shopkeepers when bargaining about prices observed 'Do you think me a Christian that I should try to deceive you?' De Nobili passed himself off as a Brahman and wore the sacred thread. He subtly attacked Hinduism from within, giving out that the Christian teachings were contained in a Hindu scripture which had been lost and which it was his mission to restore. He endeavoured to organize an Indian church on the basis of caste. Not only was the retention of caste divisions and caste practices permitted among converts,

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 302.

but corresponding distinctions were adopted by the priests who ministered to them. The Mission was divided into two branches. One confined its ministrations to the low castes; the priests of the other posed as Brahmans, worked among Brahmans, and kept aloof both from the lower castes, whether Hindu or Christian, and also from their priests, who were treated as an inferior order.

'One missionary would be seen moving about on horseback or in a palanquin, eating rice dressed by Brahmans, and saluting no one as he went along; another, covered with rags, walked on foot, surrounded by beggars, and prostrated himself as his brother missionary passed, covering his mouth lest his breath should infect the teacher of the great.'

Whatever may be thought of the propriety of these methods, there can be no doubt as to their initial success. The mission was said by the end of the seventeenth century to have made 150,000 converts, largely attracted no doubt by the recognition of caste and by the asceticism of the Jesuits, which was consonant with their ideas of holy living. The mission, however, failed to endure. Many of those who laboured among the untouchables fell victims to their privations. Their numbers, reduced by death, were insufficient for their task, and the priests who served Brahmans would neither enter the houses or the churches of untouchables, nor visit them when ill, nor give them the sacred unction when dying. Their methods of evangelization, though at first sanctioned by the Pope, were eventually banned by papal decree, and finally in 1759 Portugal suppressed the Society of Jesus and confiscated its property. By this time, however, the Jesuit and other Roman Catholic missionaries had established an Indian Christian church.

The first Protestant mission was that of the Lutherans from Denmark, who had their head-quarters at the Danish settlement of Tranquebar in Tanjore. It began with the arrival in 1706 of Ziegenbalg and Plutshau, who, like the Jesuits, permitted their converts to retain caste distinctions, and endeavoured to establish an indigenous ministry. Ziegenbalg died in 1719 but the torch was handed on by others, and when funds from Denmark failed, the English Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge stepped into the breach and financed the mission. Mission work was extended to Tanjore, Madras, Cuddalore, Tinnevely, and Trichinopoly, and the number of baptized converts rose to 50,000. Among the most distinguished of the later Danish missionaries was Schwartz, who founded the Tinnevely mission in 1750, and Ringeltaube, who established one in Travancore early in the next century. The supply of Danish missionaries now dried up, and in 1816 only three were left. The Danes, however, gave a home to the Baptist

<sup>1</sup> Rev. W. Strickland, S.J., and T. W. M. Marshall, *Catholic Missions in Southern India to 1863* (1865), pp. 57-8.



missionaries, Carey, Marsham, and Ward, in their settlement at Serampore in Bengal. Here the Governor offered them the protection of the Danish crown and the privileges of Danish citizenship, besides permission to set up a press and print the Scriptures in the languages of India; and Serampore became the *point d'appui* for the evangelization of North India.

Finding in South India a people of keen and subtle intelligence, Ziegenbalg and his associates soon realized the necessity of literary activity and the value of the printing press as an instrument of conversion. Ziegenbalg composed a Tamil grammar and translated the Bible into the same language. Schultze translated it into Telugu; Fabricius published a volume of Tamil hymns. Before them the Jesuits had been distinguished for linguistic knowledge and for literary ability. The lead was taken by Thomas Stephens (or Stevens), the first Englishman to reside in India. Fired by the example of Xavier, he went out to Goa in 1579 to work as a missionary and lived there for forty years, during five of which he was head of a Jesuit college. He made a close study of Indian languages, especially the form of Marathi called Konkani, of which he published a grammar. He also wrote a poem in Konkani, under the title of the Christian Purana, which contained the story of the Bible from the Creation to the Resurrection and was intended for use by Christian converts; this is considered one of the Konkani classics.<sup>1</sup> De Nobili, who had a deep knowledge of the Sanskrit, Telugu, and Tamil languages and literature, translated the Missal into Tamil, and produced works on Christian theology and metaphysics. The greatest Tamil writer, however, was Beschi, who joined the Madura Mission in 1700, and before his death in 1742 was recognized as the foremost Tamil scholar of his day. A voluminous author, he composed several works which are held in such high esteem for the purity of their style that they rank among the Tamil classics.

Until they acquired territorial dominion the British affected the course of Indian life no more than their European predecessors. Except in the political sphere, their influence was little more than local; they were mere eddies on its broad stream, ruffling its surface but not disturbing its current. The position was completely changed when they were transformed from merchants into rulers and administrators and began to apply western principles of government. Confronted with an alien civilization, which was reinforced by superior powers of organization and military strength, India became subject to the action and interaction of new

<sup>1</sup> *The Legacy of India* (1937), pp. 27, 217. See also M. Monier-Williams, *Modern India and the Indians* (1879), p. 266, and *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. xxii, p. 1228.

forces, which, however, were neither synchronous nor uniform. Considerable periods elapsed between different acquisitions of territory; Oudh, for example, passed under British rule nearly a century after the battle of Plassey; and the reaction of different classes to western influences depended on the extent to which they were imbued with the spirit of conservatism or were ready to adapt themselves to changed conditions. The response to the challenge of the West therefore varied greatly and showed itself in several forms, active opposition, passive acquiescence, and spontaneous acceptance. It must also be remembered that the States, comprising 45 per cent. of the area, and now containing 24 per cent. of the population of India, did not come under direct British rule, though they were under British suzerainty. They remained under the rule of their own princes; they were not governed by the law of British India; and, except in cases of gross misrule, the Government of India did not interfere with their internal administration, which long continued on traditional lines. It did, however, use its influence to secure the abolition of inhuman practices and cruel rites, such as infanticide and suttee, and it enlisted their co-operation in matters of common concern such as the railway and postal systems, while many of the States naturally tended to fall into line with British India and to modify their institutions on their own initiative by adopting British models of administration.

The most noticeable of the changes up to the time of the Mutiny, while the government of British India was in the hands of the East India Company, were the gradual introduction of the *Pax Britannica* and of the reign of law, the development of intellectual life, a re-orientation of thought towards religious and social questions, and a modification of, rather than a revolutionary change in, the economic system. The establishment of the peaceful conditions necessary for social well-being was a gradual process, which went on steadily as British rule was extended. Even in Bengal and Bihar many years elapsed before lawlessness was suppressed and the country was freed from the scourge of banditry. In 1772 bodies of banditti were reported to be plundering the north of Bengal to the number of 50,000; even as late as 1810 Lord Minto referred to a monstrous and disorganized state of society due to the great bodies of armed banditti who robbed or burned villages, and murdered or tortured their inhabitants. Scarcely were law and order established in one tract when the process had to be repeated in another. The territories in Upper India which were annexed in 1803 were swarming with disbanded soldiers and robbers, and authority was frequently set at defiance. The villages round Delhi, for example, were 'a sodality of criminals', who quartered the



capital out in shares and had a monopoly of the plunder in their allotted portions. One village was subdued only after a battle in which a force of five battalions, supported by cavalry and artillery, was employed.<sup>1</sup> In Central India the hordes of free-booters known as Pindaris, a floating population of mercenaries and desperadoes, scoured the country, and it was not till after 1819 that the ploughman began again to turn up a soil which, as the Marquess Hastings said, had for many seasons never been stirred except by the hoofs of predatory cavalry. In 1824 there were still 10,000 men under arms in Rohilkhand, where the numerous chiefs, angry at being without employment and without any hope of rising in the State or army, continually broke out into acts of lawless violence. According to Bishop Heber, there were a general laxity of law and an almost universal prevalence of intestine feuds and habits of plunder in all the independent states and in some of the districts partially subject to British control.<sup>2</sup> In the Punjab the Sikhs were soldiers almost to a man and familiar with the handling of arms from boyhood. Oudh up to the time of its annexation in 1856 was bristling with forts; over 1,500 had to be demolished during the Mutiny, when, moreover, there were more than 100,000 men under arms apart from mutinous sepoys.

One of the first problems to be solved was economic as well as political—the absorption in the general population of soldiers, free lances, and military adventurers and the conversion into agricultural and industrial workers of millions of men who had served as mercenaries or camp followers or as retainers of great noblemen.<sup>3</sup> The change was far from popular. The disbanded soldiery were loath to turn their swords and spears into ploughshares and pruning hooks. A life of foray was more congenial and also more lucrative than the settled ways of peace. How general was the discontent caused by the change may be seen from the remarks of Mountstuart Elphinstone with reference to districts annexed from the Peshwa and incorporated in Bombay.

“The whole of the soldiery and all connected with them—all who lived entirely by service, all who joined service and cultivation, all who had a brother in employment, who is now thrown back on the family, and all who had horses and were otherwise maintained by the existence of an

<sup>1</sup> E. Thompson, *The Life of Charles, Lord Metcalfe* (1937), pp. 67, 121.

<sup>2</sup> *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India* (1849), vol. i, pp. 236, 244; vol. ii, p. 241.

<sup>3</sup> The number of mercenaries in the second half of the eighteenth century has been estimated at two millions. That of camp-followers is incalculable, but some idea of it may be gathered from the fact that there were 31,000 followers with the army of under 7,000 men which marched under General Goddard from Cawnpore to the west coast of India in 1778-9.

army—detest us and our regular battalions and are joined by their neighbours from sympathy and national feeling.<sup>1</sup>

A limited number could, and did, find employment in the Company's army and in the police; but the majority, trained to no other calling than that of arms, found few openings and expressed their feelings in a saying which became proverbial: 'There are no jobs going under the Company's administration.'<sup>2</sup>

It has just been said that the disbanded soldiers were reluctant to convert their swords and spears into plough-shares and pruning hooks. Actually not only they, but the general population, retained their arms, matchlocks, swords, and spears long after they were necessary for the protection of their persons and property, except in the Punjab, where there was general disarmament after annexation, and in the villages round Delhi where Metcalfe when Resident (1811-14) had swords and other weapons literally turned into plough-shares, which were handed over to those villagers who surrendered their arms. Elsewhere there was no disarmament. Bishop Heber, when travelling through North India in 1824, noticed that everyone whom he met was armed; even people going to market carried either swords or shields, or spears, or matchlock guns. 'The nation', he said, 'is still one of lawless and violent habits . . . one ceases to wonder that bandits are from time to time heard of and that everybody finds it desirable to take his arms with him on a journey.'<sup>3</sup> It was estimated in 1851 that every third man was in possession of warlike weapons of one description or another.<sup>4</sup> Charles Raikes wrote a year later that in the Doab, though half a century had passed since a shot was fired in war, not a cultivator went beyond the limits of his homestead without girding on his sword.<sup>5</sup> It is scarcely necessary to stress the fact that an armed state of society is inimical to the restraints of law and that it runs counter to the principle of a civilized government, which undertakes the measures, and maintains the force, necessary for the protection of life and property, and which abolishes the right of private vengeance by transferring the office of punishment from the wronged person to an independent tribunal. Pacification cannot indeed be said to have been complete and effective till after 1857, when an Act was first passed prohibiting the possession of arms except under licence.

The establishment of courts of justice went on *pari passu* with

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Cotton, *Mountstuart Elphinstone* (1892), p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> *Company ke amal men rozgar nahin.*

<sup>3</sup> *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India* (1849), vol. i, p. 193.

<sup>4</sup> Lieut.-Col. J. S. Hodgson, *Musings on Military Matters* (Meerut, 1851), p. 80.

<sup>5</sup> *Notes on the North-Western Provinces of India* (1852), p. 181.



the establishment of peace and order. Warren Hastings, who was convinced that the British power must be an Indian power, interfering as little as possible with Indian customs, laid down the principle that its authority should be founded on the ancient laws of the country. Accordingly, both the Hindu and Islamic systems of civil or family law were maintained and Islamic criminal law continued to be administered in spite of its rigours.<sup>1</sup> Rules or regulations, it is true, were issued to supply deficiencies, but an endeavour was made to adapt them to the manners and understanding of the people and to adhere as closely as possible to their ancient usages and institutions. The judicial system was, he claimed, little more than a renewal of the laws and forms established of old in the country with no other variations than such as were necessary to give them due effect and such as the people understood and were likely to be pleased with.<sup>2</sup> Lord Cornwallis made it his aim to remodel the administration on English lines, and unlike Warren Hastings, excluded Indians from responsible office, declaring that measures for the reform of the judicial system would be useless and nugatory so long as the execution of them depended on Indians. Judicial regulations were issued in 1793 which were complicated by formalities of English procedure. In the same year the Permanent Settlement introduced an English form of landed property and created a class of landlords which was hitherto unknown in India, Cornwallis being genuinely convinced that nothing could be so contrary to the public interest as the State ownership of land and that the development of the resources of the country depended on the individual enterprise of a class of proprietors resembling English landlords.

A reaction against the anglicization of the administrative system set in during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, when Warren Hastings's policy of preserving Indian institutions was renewed at the instance of Sir Thomas Munro in Madras, Mountstuart Elphinstone in Bombay, and Sir John Malcolm in Central India. Munro pointed out that the ruling vice of the new system of government had been excessive innovation due to an honest but mistaken attempt to better the condition of the people by making everything as English as possible in a country which resembled England in nothing. In particular, there was nothing in which the judicial code departed more widely from the usage of the country than in the disuse of the village courts of justice known as *panchayats*. These had been set aside, and the village communities

<sup>1</sup> Punishment by the amputation of a limb was not abolished till 1791, and there are cases on record of men being executed by impalement. On the other hand the Islamic penal law was far more merciful in the application of capital punishment than the English law of the time.

<sup>2</sup> G. R. Gleig, *Memoirs of Warren Hastings* (1841), vol. i, p. 268.

were already in a state of incipient disintegration. They had been violently broken down in many places and in others neglected or suffered to fall into decay, but he thought they still retained enough life almost everywhere for carrying on every necessary duty of village government.<sup>1</sup> He set about to revive them, and in 1816 regulations were passed legalizing the system of *panchayats*, empowering the head-men of villages to hear and determine petty suits, and recognizing the employment of village officials for police duties. In Central India the *panchayats* were utilized by Sir John Malcolm, who after three years' (1818-21) experience of their work was enthusiastic in their praise as checking litigiousness and dispensing substantial justice. In the Deccan again Mountstuart Elphinstone maintained the system, minor cases being tried in the villages by *panchayats* under the head-men and major cases by pandits at Poona and other towns. He apprehended, however, that they would be unable to survive once civil courts, administering a definite system of law, were introduced; and this was actually what happened. The *panchayats* fell into desuetude simply because of the greater popularity of the civil courts, to which the people resorted for the settlement of their differences in preference to the village courts. The latter were without executive power, and they could not exist side by side with tribunals armed with the authority of the law and consequently able to enforce the appearance of parties and witnesses and to give effect to their decrees. The popularity of the law courts was enhanced after 1837, when Government, realizing that proceedings in which the interests of the people were vitally concerned should be conducted in languages which they understood, prescribed the use of the vernaculars for judicial and revenue proceedings. Till that year Persian had been the language of the courts, and the use of a language foreign to the magistrates and judges, as well as the parties, had placed underlings in a position to pervert the course of justice by misrepresenting the cases of the parties and the evidence of witnesses.

The first reaction of the people to English law as administered by the Supreme Court in Calcutta was one of alarm at its extensive powers, bewildering procedure, and unfamiliar principles. There was also a feeling of uneasy apprehension in regard to the civil courts in the interior, which adopted the rules of English jurisprudence to an increasing extent; but this gradually gave place to confidence in their high standard of judicial purity. The criminal law, on the other hand, was not anglicized except in Bombay. It was still mainly the Islamic penal code, modified, however, by the omission of inequitable or archaic provisions such as those which

<sup>1</sup> G. R. Gleig, *Life of Major-General Sir Thomas Munro* (1830), vol. i, p. 443; vol. iii, pp. 368, 381.



ruled out the evidence of non-Muslims as inadmissible and in murder cases required the consent of the murdered man's relatives to a prosecution. In Bombay, where there was a *tabula rasa* owing to the absence of any definite system of criminal law, a penal code was issued in 1827 which embodied English law on the subject, but in Bengal and Madras the Islamic criminal law remained in force until 1861 when it was superseded by the Indian Penal Code. Sir Thomas Munro, as we have seen, complained of the precipitancy of his countrymen in introducing English forms and institutions, but in this respect they certainly cannot be accused of undue haste. There could be no more striking proof of their readiness to innovate slowly than the fact that for seventy years after Cornwallis announced his determination to accept the administration of criminal justice the courts in a great part of India continued to administer Islamic penal law.

Two results of the judicial system may be briefly noticed, viz. the establishment of the principle of equality and the creation of a consciousness of positive rights. The last was a plant of slow growth owing to the abject submissiveness of the lower classes, which prevented them from taking advantage of the system of equal laws and vindicating their rights by legal action. A change was gradually effected. In 1841, for example, it was noticed that the Chamars, despised untouchables of northern India, were not afraid to bring suits against their landlords, and, it was added, 'nothing vexes or annoys the zamindars in our whole system so much as this'.<sup>1</sup> The feeling of the latter is only one instance of the resentment felt by the upper classes at the egalitarian principles of English law. As Sir John Malcolm pointed out, the people neither understood nor appreciated those unyielding forms that deny alike advantages of birth and claims of rank;<sup>2</sup> and, as will be seen later, the levelling effect of the English courts of law was one of the grievances which found vent in the Mutiny of 1857.

The establishment of the rule of law was a sociological phenomenon of the first importance, but others might give priority to English education on account of the effects of its influence in imparting knowledge of the literature and political thought, the arts and sciences of Europe. Until after the Mutiny, however, it was not so much a system of scholastic instruction as a knowledge of English acquired by other means which brought the upper classes into contact with the culture of the West and with its progressive and liberalizing ideas.

For about half a century after their acquisition of political power the British made little conscious effort to introduce western culture.

<sup>1</sup> *Slavery, East Indies: Despatch from the Governor-General*, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> J. S. Cotton, *Mountstuart Elphinstone* (1892), pp. 133-4.

Their energies were concentrated on practical and pressing problems, such as the establishment of law and order, the foundation of an administrative system, the dispensing of justice, and the raising of the revenue necessary for the discharge of the functions of government. Their mission was not to impose European civilization on the people over whom they ruled but to introduce a stable system of government, establish the rule of law, and so ensure the security of property which, according to Macaulay, is the basis of western civilization. The existing system of education, if it can be called a system, was left undisturbed but also unsupported. Elementary education continued to be given in the indigenous village schools, both Hindu and Muslim, which were scattered over the country. Higher Hindu education, as in previous centuries, was fostered in the institutions called *talas*, in which Brahmans, living in great simplicity of life, studied the law, metaphysics, and philosophy embodied in Sanskrit works. The *madrasas* or Muslim colleges, however, appear to have fallen into neglect or decay; Warren Hastings remarked in 1784 that the *madrasa* at Calcutta, which he had founded three years earlier, was almost the only complete establishment of its kind in India, although similar institutions were once in universal use and their decayed remains could be seen in every capital, town, and city of Hindustan and the Deccan. The foundation of this institution and of a Hindu College at Benares were the only educational efforts of the new government, whose object was strictly utilitarian, viz. the provision of a supply of Indians qualified by knowledge of Hindu and Islamic law to assist in the judicial administration. So far from trying to introduce English learning and literature into India, early administrators were fascinated by the wealth and novelty of India's cultural heritage: *India capta ferum victorem cepit*. Oriental learning, especially in Sanskrit, was the vogue; even Colebrooke described Wilkins as 'Sanskrit-mad', and those who did not share these tastes complained that the Englishmen in India became Brahminized.

Higher learning among the Indian community languished, largely owing to the withdrawal of the patronage which it had received from Indian courts and nobles. In 1811 Lord Minto, after declaring that it was a matter of common repute that Indian science and literature were in a state of progressive decay, expressed a fear that, unless Government intervened, the revival of letters might become hopeless from a want of books or of persons capable of explaining them. Elphinstone used similar language in a minute on education which he wrote in 1824. The fountains of native talent, he said, had dried up, and, all encouragement to the advancement of knowledge having been withdrawn, the actual learn-



ing of the nation was likely to be lost and the productions of former genius to be forgotten. Lord Minto's minute was partly responsible for a provision in the Charter Act of 1813 that a grant of not less than a lakh of rupees (£10,000) should be allotted for 'the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives' of British India as well as for the introduction of the sciences among them. This was the first recognition of State responsibility for education, and it antedated by twenty years similar action in Great Britain.<sup>1</sup> Nothing, however, was done to implement legislation until 1823, when a Committee of Public Instruction was appointed in Bengal and charged with the expenditure of the annual grants which had accumulated. This body held that its functions were to encourage Oriental, and not English, education for the benefit of a limited class. It promoted the establishment of institutions devoted to Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian, because, in its own words, 'it is to such alone, even in the present day, that the influential and learned classes, those who are by birthright or profession teachers and expounders of literature, law, and religion, *maulvis* and pandits, willingly resort.'

There was as yet no idea of the State making itself responsible for introducing English education. The Orientalists, as those were called who favoured the cultivation of Oriental classics, were sufficiently numerous and influential to direct educational policy. There was, as Jacquemont remarked in 1829, 'a fashion of Sanskrit and literary Orientalism', and the small educational grant was utilized solely for the promotion of oriental learning. English education was first introduced as a result not of State action but of private initiative on the part of enlightened Indians and Christian missionaries, more especially the Baptist missionaries of Serampore, Carey, Marshman, and Ward. The latter founded colleges and schools of a sectarian character, and it was left to the co-operation of Indian and English private individuals to establish the first secular college devoted to English education. This was the Hindu College in Calcutta, which owed its origin to three men, David Hare, an illiterate but philanthropic watchmaker; Raja Ram Mohan Ray, the foremost Indian scholar and reformer of his day; and Sir Hyde East, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court; and its finances were derived from the voluntary contributions of the public.

In Bombay and Madras matters took a different course. In Bombay attention was at first concentrated on education in the vernacular, with whose claims Sanskrit and Arabic did not compete, but, as experience led to a realization of the value of English,

<sup>1</sup> In 1833 the British Government allotted £20,000 a year as grants-in-aid to two denominational school societies, but it did not control distribution till 1839.

the latter took its place in the system. In Madras even less was done for English education, English being taught, loosely and unsystematically, merely to the extent necessary for colloquial intercourse. Even at this time English had been to a great extent adopted in Madras as a common medium of conversation not only between Indians and Europeans but between Indians themselves, and a colloquial knowledge of it was a much more common acquirement in Madras than in Bengal.<sup>1</sup> The only other place where steps were taken for the promotion of education in English was Delhi, where a college for the study of western learning was set up in 1829 at the request of the authorities there.

An impetus was given to the movement in favour of English by a declaration made by Lord William Bentinck's Government in 1829 that it intended to make English gradually and eventually the language of public business throughout the country. Two years later the Committee of Public Instruction put it on record that a taste for English had been widely disseminated, and that independent English schools conducted by young men who had been brought up at the Hindu College were springing up in every direction. Those who had received the new education regarded its extension as both a duty and a pleasure. They seemed to be fired by the zeal of converts and to be actuated by a genuine desire to benefit their countrymen; it was also noticed that the same class was distinguished for its ready support of public charities. Rich men founded schools at their own expense; those who had not the means clubbed together for the same purpose. Lord William Bentinck may be said to have responded to a popular demand when, on 7 March 1835, after studying Macaulay's well-known minute, he announced his decision in favour of English education—a decision which has been described as the great landmark in the history of the British Empire considered as an institute of civilization.<sup>2</sup>

There has been so much misunderstanding of its implications and of the objects which were in view at the time that a few words in explanation of them are necessary. Actually government had only a limited objective, as was clearly indicated in the annual report of the Committee of Public Instruction (a document probably drafted by its president, Macaulay), which appeared soon afterwards:

'We are', they wrote, 'deeply sensible of the importance of encouraging the cultivation of the vernacular languages. We do not conceive that the order of the 7th of March precludes us from doing this, and we have constantly acted on this construction. In the discussions which preceded that order the claims of the vernacular languages were broadly

<sup>1</sup> C. E. Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India* (1838), pp. 178-9.

<sup>2</sup> J. Seeley, *The Expansion of England* (1885), p. 253.



and prominently admitted by all parties, and the question submitted for the decision of Government only concerned the relative advantage of teaching English on the one side and the learned Eastern languages on the other. We therefore conceive that the phrases "European literature and sciences", "English education alone",<sup>1</sup> and "imparting to the native population a knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of the English language" are intended merely to secure the preference to European learning, taught through the medium of the English language, over Oriental learning, taught through the medium of the Sanskrit and Arabic languages, as regards the instruction of those natives who receive a learned education at our seminaries. These expressions have, as we understand them, no reference to the question through what ulterior medium such instruction as the mass of the people is capable of receiving is to be conveyed. If English had been rejected and the learned Eastern tongues adopted, the people must equally have received their knowledge through the vernacular dialects. . . . At present the extensive cultivation of some foreign language is rendered indispensable by the almost total absence of a vernacular literature and the consequent impossibility of obtaining a tolerable education from that source alone.

The antithesis, it will be observed, was between learned education in higher 'seminaries' and education for the masses, in other words primary education. The former was to be imparted in English and its subject was to be the learning contained in English literature and science. The latter was to continue to be conveyed through the medium of the current colloquial languages. Macaulay never dreamt that English would become the language of Indian literature or of everyday life. He was concerned only with higher education and not with primary education; and considering the needs of India and of its administration at the time, it is difficult to argue that English education was not necessary.

When Government proceeded to implement Lord William Bentinck's decision, it merely set about establishing one high school at the head-quarters of each district. English education was intended for the upper and middle classes in urban areas, though there was an idea that it would gradually spread from the towns to the villages, apparently *suo motu*, and also filter down to the lower classes—a curious idea of spontaneous percolation which is known as 'the filtration theory'. So far the lower classes did not come into the picture. The provision of a liberal education for the upper and middle classes, irrespective of caste, was, however, an innovation so far as the Hindu community was concerned. Elementary education, imparted in the language of everyday life,

<sup>1</sup> The Government resolution had affirmed that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of English literature and science among the natives of India and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed in English education alone.

had been open to all who cared to learn, but higher education, consisting of the study of Sanskrit works, had been the exclusive privilege of Brahmans and of a certain number of Vaidyas, who learnt medicine. There was no such gulf between popular and higher education among Muslims. A boy learnt the Koran by heart in a primary school, memorizing its words and not necessarily understanding their meaning, and could proceed to the higher study of Arabic and Persian in more advanced institutions.

The popularity of the decision in favour of English education was soon obvious. The thirst for the new learning was so great that the demand for English schools was greater than the supply; there seemed, it was said, no limit to the number of scholars except the number of teachers who could be provided. The passion for English knowledge, wrote Sir Charles Trevelyan in 1838, penetrated the most obscure, and extended to the most remote, parts of India. Steamers passing up and down the Ganges were boarded by boys begging for books; one traveller could only satisfy their clamorous demands by cutting up an old number of the *Quarterly Review* and distributing its articles among them. The independent chiefs of the Punjab made so many requests to the Political Agent on the frontier to arrange for English education for their children that Government deputed a schoolmaster to serve on his staff.<sup>1</sup>

The enthusiasm for English education, however, was practically confined to the Hindus. The Muslim community was bitterly opposed to it. In 1835, as soon as the new educational policy was announced, it made known its views in a memorial which stated outright that the object of Government in encouraging English, and discouraging Hindu and Islamic studies, was the conversion of the people to Christianity. There was scarcely any relaxation from this attitude of suspicion and hostility for half a century. The Muslims remained attached to their traditional culture and desired to study only the law, literature, and theology of Islam, even though government announced in 1844 that in making appointments to the public service it would give preference to those who had received an education in English. English education was accordingly almost the exclusive possession of the Hindus, and only of the upper classes among them, for it did not as yet penetrate to the lower strata of society. It was also almost entirely a secondary school education, for there were few colleges until after the establishment of Universities; in 1860-1 the number of collegiate students in all India was under 4,000, while the aggregate of those under instruction at secondary schools was still only 200,000.

Many of the early Indian leaders of thought were not the product of any system of English education, but were self-

<sup>1</sup> See C. E. Trevelyan, *On Education in India* (1838), pp. 82, 135, 166-7.



taught men, who obtained their knowledge not from the instruction given in schools and colleges but from independent study. Raja Ram Mohan Ray himself did not begin the study of English till after he was 21 years of age. The members of the party of religious and social reform which he led acquired their knowledge of English and liberality of thought chiefly from their association and personal intercourse with Europeans; according to Dr. Duff, not one of them except the Raja could be said to have gained a thorough knowledge of English and in mental culture they were not even half-Anglicized.

Among other agencies at work special prominence should be given to the printing-press. The art of printing had been introduced by Christian missionaries as early as the sixteenth century, but the output was small and consisted only of a few works of Christian religious literature. The only other books were manuscripts, which were the possession of the wealthy or cultured few. The masses derived their knowledge of the works of their poets from oral recitations. The establishment in the early part of the nineteenth century of printing-presses which produced books in Indian languages as well as in English had an extraordinary effect, especially as the previous stagnation of intellectual life had left the minds of the people particularly susceptible to stimulation. English books let loose a flood of new ideas among those who could read them. Translations of Sanskrit works made them public property and no longer the jealously guarded monopoly of Brahmans, by whom they were held as sacred as the ark of the covenant on which no sacrilegious hand might be laid. A prose literature came into being in North India, where it was a new development of intellectual life, for hitherto literature had almost entirely consisted of poetry and metrical compositions, mainly religious or mythological in character. Prose owed its origin to a utilitarian and secular object, viz. the provision of text-books for the instruction in Indian languages of the young civil servants who were under training at the College of Fort William in Calcutta, but it soon came into general use as a vehicle for the expression of original thought.

Books were not the only educators. Knowledge was spread and a wider outlook opened out by newspapers published in the current Indian languages as well as by English papers, which catered for the English community but had also a circulation in Indian circles. The first Indian newspaper was the *Bengal Gazette*, which was started in 1816 by Gangadhar Bhattacharya, a Brahman connected with the teaching staff of Fort William College. This lived only for a year.<sup>1</sup> The next and more important venture was due to the

<sup>1</sup> See S. C. Sanial, 'History of the Press in India', *Calcutta Review*, 1911, pp. 17-18.

enterprise of the Serampore missionaries, who in 1818 started a weekly Bengali paper called the *Samachar Darpan* i.e. Mirror of News, with the express object of stimulating a spirit of inquiry and spreading knowledge among the Indian public. A fortnight later, in order to counter its attacks on Hinduism, a Hindu brought out a paper bearing a title which meant the Dispeller of Darkness. This was an ephemeral publication and its light was soon extinguished; but by 1823 there were four Indian newspapers in Calcutta alone,<sup>1</sup> and the vernacular press may be said to have been launched though it still had little influence beyond a limited circle.

The time was one of intellectual ferment and unrest, with eager and restless questions about the foundations of religious and social life. Three schools of thought asserted themselves. One, indoctrinated with western rationalism, was iconoclastic. Critical of authority and tradition, it denounced ancestral beliefs and practices, particularly caste restrictions, and urged their general abandonment. The second, stimulated by the new knowledge, endeavoured to reform Hinduism from within and to preserve its essential truths while freeing it from corruptions. The respect for it as an institutional religion was weakened or destroyed, but the religious sentiment remained and sought new forms of expression. The third consisted of the great body of conservative opinion, deeply rooted in sentiment and custom, which was hostile to the infusion of new ideas or the adoption of European habits and suspicious of innovations which it regarded as subversive of the old order.

The first school of thought adopted an aggressive attitude towards Hinduism and openly defied its canons, while some of its adherents shocked public opinion by offensive demonstrations, due in part no doubt to youthful exuberance, such as drinking to excess and throwing beef into a Brahman's house. They did not adopt Christianity but, in the words of Dr. Duff, renounced the whole system of Hinduism, pure and impure, ancient and modern, Vedantic and Puranic, and, being thus left in a region of vacancy as regards religion, announced themselves to the world as free inquirers after truth.<sup>2</sup> Intellectually they were children of the English, socially they were a class apart, divorced on their own initiative from orthodox Hindu society. There was little sympathy either between them and their countrymen, or between them and the English; they had been raised out of one society without having a recognized place in another. They were

<sup>1</sup> Two were in Bengali and two in Persian, which, as stated in the prospectus of one of them, was understood by all the respectable part of the community.

<sup>2</sup> See S. C. Sanial, 'History of the Press in India', *Calcutta Review*, 1911, p. 30.



an anti-Hindu leaven in society, so much so that the editor of one newspaper saw in them an agency for the dissolution of Hinduism and wrote: 'Has not the Hindu College been the foundation of a new race of men amongst us? Have all the efforts of the missionaries given a tithe of that shock to the superstitions of the people which has been given by the Hindu College?'<sup>1</sup>

The second school of thought was led, and indeed typified, by Raja Ram Mohan Ray, who, while acknowledging the value of the ethical doctrines of Christianity, clung to Hinduism as a religion, and, so far from abandoning it, made it his object to reform it and for this purpose founded the Brahmo Samaj. Like Luther, who appealed to the Bible as an authority against medieval corruptions, he took his stand on the *Vedas*, the earliest Hindu scriptures, in which he found a form of pure Hinduism, of which the basis was a belief in one God, which was not vitiated by idolatry, and which gave no sanction to distinctions of caste or such practices as suttee. Raja Ram Mohan Ray and his successors in the Brahmo Samaj, Debendranath Tagore and Keshab Chandra Sen, all exhibited the interaction of India and western influences. Ram Mohan Ray was attracted to monotheism by contact with Muslims; he was strongly affected by the ethical teachings of Christ and believed that asceticism is not necessary for a religious life, which can be lived in social surroundings; but his beliefs were still rooted in Hinduism. Debendranath Tagore spent three years in solitary contemplation in the Himalayas, chanted the poetry of Persian Sufis, and shared in their mysticism; but he also studied the works of Hume, Fichte, and Victor Cousin, and was well acquainted with the principles of rationalistic philosophy. Keshab Chandra Sen, who was familiar with the doctrines of writers like Sir William Hamilton, Victor Cousin, Emerson, and Theodore Parker, said that it was the purpose of his life to preach the union of eastern and western theism, the reconciliation of Europe and Asia,<sup>2</sup> and that half his heart was in sympathy with Europe and the other half with Asia. Their followers were strong not in numbers, but in rank, influence, and intellectual attainments. The tenets of the Samaj were too refined and eclectic to be popular; it was widely separated from Hinduism by its denial of the doctrine of metempsychosis and incarnations and never became a Hindu sect. It also never became a Church, but rather represented a movement, which spread spiritualizing ideas among the Hindus and, by its liberal views in regard to caste system, child marriages, and the position and education of women, gradually leavened and changed the ideas of the Hindu intelligentsia. Its influence extended to Madras, where a theistic society

<sup>1</sup> P. Percival, *Land of the Vedas* (1834), p. 472.

<sup>2</sup> See Max Müller, *Biographical Essays* (1884), p. 143.

was started in 1864 under the name of the Veda Samaj, which was changed later to the Brahmo Samaj of South India. A similar theistic movement in Bombay resulted in the foundation of the Prarthana Samaj, meaning the Society of Prayer, which held enlightened views in regard to social usages, particularly child marriage, and was joined by some of the leaders of thought in West India such as Mr. Justice Ranade and Mr. G. K. Gokhale.

The immediate and direct influence of Raja Ram Mohan Ray's school of thought was first seen in the agitation over the question of suttee, the abolition of which had been urged for many years by Christian missionaries. The orthodox party, anxious to maintain the *status quo* but quick to realize the advantage to be gained by organization, started an association called the *Dharma Sabha* for the defence of this and other cherished institutions, and, not disdaining the use of a western polemical weapon, found one in a newspaper which hotly opposed reform. The fight over suttee ended, as is well known, in its prohibition in Bengal in 1829 by Lord William Bentinck, who himself said that government was merely following, and not leading, public opinion, which had long been setting in the direction of abolition. Regulations making suttee a legal offence were passed next year in Bombay and Madras, and all were quietly acquiesced in. Recourse was had not to violence but to legal process, the *Dharma Sabha* merely making an appeal to the Privy Council on the ground that the measure contravened the pledge given in various Acts of Parliament that there would be no interference with the religion of the people. This appeal was dismissed in 1832.

Suttee naturally continued unchecked in independent territories such as the Punjab, where one of the first orders issued after annexation was 'Thou shalt not burn a widow, thou shalt not kill a daughter, thou shalt not bury a leper alive'. It was also prevalent in the protected States, to which people from adjoining areas in British India resorted for the performance of the rite. Sir James Rivett-Carnac, Governor of Bombay from 1839 to 1841, induced the Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda and the Raja of Satara to proclaim the abolition of the rite within the limits of their territories,<sup>1</sup> and orders of abolition were issued in Indore by Hari Rao Holkar (1837-43). The practice was particularly common in the States of Rajputana. Other States, when urged to abandon the rite, said it would be time enough to do so when Rajputana led the way. Eventually it gave a lead in the abolitionist movement owing to the personal influence of Major (afterwards General) Ludlow, Resident at Jaipur from 1844 to 1847, who was enabled to make his influence effective by his position as President of the Council of

<sup>1</sup> 'Letters of a Governor of Bombay, 1839-41', *Calcutta Review*, 1900, p. 582.



Regency during the minority of the Maharaja. Even so his efforts would probably have been unavailing had he not obtained a ruling from the chief Brahman Pandit at Jaipur to the effect that the immolation of widows was less meritorious than the living suttee of chastity and devotion. Armed with this authority Ludlow in 1846 induced the Council of Regency to make suttee a penal offence. Before the end of the year eleven out of the States in Rajputana, and five States outside it enacted similar measures. They were, however, not effectively implemented. Sir Henry Lawrence wrote in 1854 that suttee was put down only in name and was hardly punished, while it was not even forbidden in Mewar, Bikaner, and Alwar. Gradually, however, it fell into desuetude. In Udaipur the last suttee took place in 1861, and after that the practice may be said to have ceased either as the result of legal prohibition or abandonment by consent.<sup>1</sup>

Bitterly opposed as the parties of orthodoxy and reform were to one another in regard to the reform of Hinduism and such questions as caste and suttee, they presented a united front against the attack of Protestant missionaries and launched a counter-attack. The agitation over suttee having died down, the vernacular papers turned their attention to Christianity, and a curious triangular duel ensued. The orthodox and advanced journals inveighed against each other on the question of religious and social reforms. Both opened their columns to declamations against Christianity. For their part the missionary publications drew attention to the defects of Hinduism, the evils of the caste system, &c., and pointed out the truth of the Christian religion and the superiority of western learning and science. Active missionary propaganda had now been in progress in northern India for over a quarter of a century, and Lord Minto had noticed in 1807 that its effect was not to convert but to alienate the followers of both Hinduism and Islam owing to the crude methods it followed. 'Hell fire' was 'denounced against a whole race of men for believing in the religion which they were taught by their fathers and mothers.' Hindus were exhorted to abolish 'the whole institution of caste, that is to say their whole system of civil polity, as well as their fondest and most rooted religious tenets'; and resentment was roused by invective launched against the revered order of Brahmins.<sup>2</sup> There does not, however, appear to have been any widespread expression of this feeling of resentment

<sup>1</sup> See H. J. Bushby, *Widow-burning* (1855), pp. 37-9, E. Thompson, *Suttee* (1928), p. 109, and J. L. Marison, *Lawrence of Lucknow* (1934), p. 276.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Minto in *India*, p. 78. This account is confirmed by the description given by John Clark Marshman of a tract composed by Carey. 'He exposed the absurdities of Hindooism and the pretensions of its priesthood to ridicule in the most poignant language.' *The Story of Carey, Marshman, and Ward* (1864), p. 62.

until after 1830. Dr. Duff, who arrived in India in that year, noticed that the vernacular press began for the first time to make a vigorous assault on Christianity and that bitter hostility towards it was the common characteristic of all the newspapers. A mushroom growth of ephemeral publications sprang up which relied largely on extracts from Paine's *Age of Reason* translated verbatim—an interesting indication of the extent to which contemporary English literature was studied and used for polemical purposes. In addition to evanescent publications of this kind, the regular newspapers joined in the campaign and created or revived an anti-Christian feeling, which was not without a bearing on the outbreak of the Mutiny.<sup>1</sup> Suspicion and fear of missionary efforts were at the same time common in Bombay, where the Governor noticed in 1840 that the people were becoming restless about the proceedings of the missionaries, whose efforts were counteracted by the alarm they created.<sup>2</sup>

Economic changes, though not comparable to those which took place later, were far from negligible. A body of proprietary landlords had been created in Bengal, Bihar, and parts of Madras and the United Provinces. A peasant proprietary had been called into being by recognizing the right of cultivators to transfer their holdings by gift, sale, or mortgage; landed rights of this kind were not previously recognized, the cultivators being regarded as owners of their crops but not of the soil. There had been a great extension of cultivation, though this was checked in some parts by excessive assessment of revenue and the malpractices of low-paid agents of government. In the Deccan, for example, according to the Bombay Administration Report of 1872-3, gross oppression and even torture were at one time applied to wring an excessive assessment out of the peasantry; numbers abandoned their homes and fled into the neighbouring Native States; large tracts of land were thrown out of cultivation and in some districts no more than a third of the cultivable area remained in occupation. After 1835 a remarkable change was effected by the survey and settlement proceedings, of which the results are apparent from the remarks made in 1864 by Sir Bartle Frere, who said that it was impossible to give anyone who had not seen the country, as he had, nearly 30 years before, any idea of the change in 'this India which is always said to be so immutable'. Then rarely more than one-third of the cultivable land *in any district*<sup>3</sup> was under cultivation; often as much as two-thirds of the land lay waste; villages were frequently to be met

<sup>1</sup> See S. C. Sanial, 'History of the Press in India', *Calcutta Review*, 1911, pp. 27, 28, 39.

<sup>2</sup> 'Letters of a Governor of Bombay, 1839-41', *Calcutta Review* (1909), p. 557.

<sup>3</sup> The italics are mine.



with which were almost deserted; some were utterly uninhabited. Since then cultivation had been increased to such a remarkable extent that he believed it would be difficult for anyone wishing to take up land for cultivation to find anywhere in the Deccan area a thousand acres of unoccupied cultivable land available for the purpose.<sup>1</sup> A middle class was also in process of formation, consisting of the owners of landed estates and urban property, merchants, traders, and members of various professions such as lawyers, doctors, and journalists, the last class including a number of men of the first literary rank.

Probably the most important economic change was the abolition of slavery, a measure which was undertaken in response to the humanitarian principles which were current in England. There is no record of the number of slaves in existence, but Sir Bartle Frere in 1841 estimated the number in British India (as then constituted) as eight to nine millions. No census of them was taken, and estimates of the proportion which the slave population in different parts bore to the free population varied enormously, partly no doubt because of regional differences and partly because no clear distinction was made between slaves and serfs. A report on slavery issued in 1841 gives some general indication of the extent both of slavery and serfdom, but its information was admittedly partial and incomplete. It found that slavery prevailed more or less throughout the presidencies of Bengal and Madras and mentioned cases of owners who had as many as 2,000 slaves. Predial slavery or serfdom was in existence in Bengal, Madras, Assam, Coorg, and the south of Bombay; it was especially common in Assam, where there was no free labour employed in agriculture.

This summary may be supplemented from other sources. Sir William Jones, for example, observed in 1785, in a charge to a grand jury in Calcutta, that there was hardly a man or woman in that populous town who had not at least one slave child. A report of 1789 stated that in the island of Sandwip off the coast of Bengal there was a slave in every household; the majority had several and one man was the owner of 1,500. In Madras the Board of Revenue reported in 1818 that in the Telugu country to the north labourers were free men, but throughout the Tamil country, as well as in Malabar and Canara, by far the greater part of the labouring classes were, and had from time immemorial been, in a state of acknowledged bondage. Bondage in some cases connoted slavery and in others agrestic serfdom, and in all cases, the Board noticed, was connected with the systems of land-tenure. In the Tamil country to the south, where the land was held more fre-

<sup>1</sup> Speech introducing a Land Survey and Settlement Bill in the Bombay Council on 18 October 1864.

quently by village communities than by individual families, the labourer was understood to be the slave of the soil rather than of its owner, and was seldom sold or mortgaged except with the land. In Malabar and Canara to the west, where the land was very generally held by individual families as separate and distinct properties, the field labourer was the personal slave of the proprietor, who sold and mortgaged him independently of the land. Slaves in Malabar were also exposed to sale by public auction in execution of decrees or in satisfaction of the revenue demands of the government, i.e. if their owners defaulted in payment of the revenue due from them. This practice, which was in force only in Malabar, was put a stop to in 1819. In that year it was estimated that there were 82,000 slaves in Canara and 100,000 in Malabar, where they were regarded as part of the live stock of an estate and a man's wealth was estimated by the number of his slaves as much as by his possession of other kinds of property. In Assam slaves were openly bought and sold, many being persons who had sold themselves in payment of debt or had mortgaged themselves and their heirs for the payment of loans. All persons of respectable position had one or more, who did housework or laboured in the fields. In 1812 it was estimated that one-sixth of the population of Sylhet consisted of slaves, mostly the descendants of insolvent debtors; in Kamrup 12,000 slaves were released after its cession to the British.

Our information about the north-west of India is more scanty, and Hamilton's *Hindustan* (1817) summarizes the position in the general, but rather cryptic, statement that slaves were neither so few as to be of no consideration nor so numerous as to constitute a notable proportion of the population. In the area now comprised in the United Provinces and the west of Bihar the claims of the larger landlords to the services of hereditary serfs were said to be nearly obsolete, but the field labourers employed by petty peasant-landholders were described as 'decidedly slaves'. In these areas domestic slavery was a recognized institution, but the domestic slaves were mostly women serving the inmates of the zenanas of well-to-do families. In 1831 Jacquemont observed that all little girls in Kashmir who showed promise of being pretty were sold at the age of eight and exported to India. According to him, all female servants in the Punjab (then an independent kingdom under Ranjit Singh) were slaves, and whatever the English might do to abolish slavery in their territories, it prevailed none the less in northern India.<sup>1</sup> In the State of Malwa male slaves were rare, but all classes, high and low, had female slaves, and in the opinion of Sir John Malcolm, there was perhaps no province in India where there were so many. A great number had come from Rajputana,

<sup>1</sup> *Letters from India, 1829-32*, translated by C. A. Phillips (1936), p. 216.



fugitives from the tyranny of the Marathas, which reduced the people to such distress as to compel parents to sell their children. They were also imported from Gujarat, many being kidnapped children. A regular slave-trade went on, slaves being exported to Poona and the Deccan, where they fetched high prices and brought in large profits to the Maratha Brahmans, by whom the trade was principally carried on.

The history of the abolition of slavery is one of the gradual translation into practice of the humanitarian ideas derived from England. It is an admirable illustration of the principle so long followed by the Government of India that legislation should be well-considered, gradual, and slow, as well as a practical example of its economical policy, for emancipation was eventually effected without any cost to the State finances. At first the government not only recognized slavery but itself passed a measure of enslavement in 1772, when Warren Hastings made a draconian law which carried on the traditional practice of the Mughal government in dealing with dacoits. It provided that men convicted of the crime of robbery under arms known as dacoity should be executed in the villages to which they belonged and that their families should 'become the slaves of the State and be disposed of for the general benefit and convenience of the people'—a periphrasis apparently for sale by auction. It was obviously felt that some apology was needed for such a measure, for the Committee of Circuit, which proposed it, pointed out that slaves in India were treated very differently from those in America. 'Here slaves are treated as the children of the families to which they belong and often acquire a much happier state by their slavery than they could have hoped for by the enjoyment of liberty.'<sup>1</sup>

Warren Hastings, however, was opposed to slavery as a general institution and in a minute recorded in 1774, after referring to the practice of kidnapping children and selling them for slaves, expressed the opinion that the only way of striking at the evil would be to abolish the right of slavery except where it was sanctioned by the existing law or slaves had 'become a just property by pur-

<sup>1</sup> This view is confirmed by other contemporary accounts so far as domestic slaves were concerned. The lot of field labourers, whether slaves or serfs, especially in South India, was very different, as they received merely a subsistence. In his *Oriental Memoirs* (vol. II, p. 225) Forbes remarked that the Muslims in general treated their slaves with humanity and rendered their servitude easy and comfortable, while those purchased by the English had not much reason to complain of their lot. All were household servants and often confidential domestic friends, and they were never employed in agriculture or other laborious work. 'With the Dutch in India their condition is not so pleasant, but the most unfortunate of all are those who fall into the hands of the Portuguese, generally a worthless race treating their helpless captives with excessive cruelty.' An Italian traveller noted in the first part of the seventeenth century that the majority of the inhabitants of Goa were slaves.

chase antecedent to the proposed prohibition'. He had already consulted leaders of the Muslim and Hindu communities, who condemned the practice of selling slaves as repugnant to the precepts both of the Koran and the *Sastras*, as oppressive to the people, and as injurious to the general welfare of the country. All that he did, however, was to issue a Regulation in 1774, forbidding the stealing of children and their sale as slaves without the execution of a deed; but this measure was disregarded, for according to Sir William Jones it was in 1785 common to see large boats coming down the Hooghly filled with children who were openly sold in Calcutta. Lord Cornwallis again, while personally favouring measures of abolition, hesitated to act because of the large vested interests involved and because, he said, the practice was sanctioned by the laws of both Muslims and Hindus. He did, however, attack the export trade, which was in the hands of low Portuguese and other European foreigners, who bought up children and exported them overseas to French possessions and inland to other parts of India. To put a stop to the traffic he issued a proclamation in 1789 to the effect that all persons concerned in it should be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law and, if British-born subjects, deported; a proclamation in similar terms was issued by the Madras Government next year. This was followed up in 1811 by prohibiting the import of slaves from foreign countries; and efforts were made to stop another source of supply by rescuing children from kidnappers and prosecuting their abductors in the criminal courts. Sir Charles (afterwards Lord) Metcalfe, acting on his own initiative while Resident at Delhi (1811-14), prohibited the sale of slaves in Delhi and its environs, but the Government of India intervened by ruling that his orders should apply only to the sale of freemen and that the sale or transfer of those who were already slaves should be allowed to go on.

A further small advance was made in 1832, when the purchase and sale of slaves taken from one district to another was made a penal offence. Their sale within a district was left untouched; during the famine of 1837-8 children in the north-west of India were sold for a few rupees; and there was still open defiance of the law in Calcutta itself, where in 1834, as a result of destitution caused by disastrous floods, children were being hawked about the streets for sale. A death-blow was at last given to the institution by a law passed in 1843 (Act V of 1843), which deprived it of its legal status by providing that the civil courts could not take cognizance of claims to slaves—an indirect method of abolition. After this slavery began to disappear in British India, to which alone the Act applied, and all trade in and possession of slaves were finally prohibited by the Penal Code of 1860. Similar measures were adopted by the



States, Travancore, for example, issuing a proclamation in 1855 by which all slaves who were the property of the State were liberated, the law courts were forbidden to admit the claim of any slave-owner, and slaves were given the right to own property and obtain legal redress for injuries. Emancipation was thus effected without any popular demand for it but also without any opposition or outcry from those affected, even though they lost a valuable form of property without receiving a penny of compensation; and it might perhaps be deduced that by this time it was not a matter of grave economic or social importance.

An admirable estimate of the effect of western influences up to the time of the Mutiny is contained in Professor Dodwell's remark that the forces of change had been enough to alarm but not enough to influence.<sup>1</sup> The greatest change was probably the establishment of the principle of equality before the law which affected all classes, high and low, rural and urban. English education was not as yet widely diffused and was mainly an urban growth. The era of material improvement and industrial expansion had scarcely begun. The postal system, the telegraph, and the railways were not in existence before 1850. Medical relief could be obtained in few places beyond the perimeter of the great cities and towns; even in 1860 there were less than 100 district dispensaries in the whole of British India. There was no organized system of famine prevention and relief, nor indeed is it easy to see how such a system could have been possible in the absence of adequate means of transport. Famine was long regarded as a dispensation of Providence, the horrors of which could not be prevented, and could be only slightly mitigated, by human efforts, though a system of granting loans to cultivators when in distress had been adopted as early as 1793. So little was the feasibility of relief measures appreciated that in *Modern India* (1853) Sir George Campbell dismissed the subject with the words: 'When there is no food in the country and no means of speedy importation, no Government, however rich or philanthropic, can save the people. If it buys the grain, it only raises the price and diminishes the quantity in the market.' After briefly referring to the famines of 1770 in Bengal and of 1786 in the Punjab, he went on to say: 'So lately as 1837 a dreadful famine depopulated the country about Agra. Such occurrences can only be mitigated as peace, plenty, and the increase of capital cause grain to be more largely stored than formerly.' This brief mention may be supplemented by the contemporary account of the Collector of Hissar, who described scenes of lawlessness and starvation resembling those of previous centuries. 'The starving population are rushing headlong into every crime; I hear of nothing but

<sup>1</sup> *A Sketch of the History of India from 1838 to 1918* (1925), p. 4.

plundering and burning and wounding and killing in my old district; the villages are rising *en masse* and are attacking their neighbours, and the Magistrate is fairly set at defiance.' Of the country round Etawah he wrote: 'Hundreds perishing with famine daily; the river Jumna choked with putrefying corpses, which the stream cannot carry down; cholera, as a necessary consequence of this misery, broken out.' 'Even in this part of the country,' i.e. Hissar, 'which is so much better off than any other part of the Upper Provinces, the people are beginning to sell their children, and you can purchase a child for a few rupees'.<sup>1</sup> It must not be imagined that government made no effort to relieve the starving during this terrible visitation, which affected ten to fifteen millions. Measures of relief were undertaken at a cost of £500,000 and about a million persons were employed on relief works, but there were no organized schemes of relief on such a large scale as were evolved later, the operations had to be extemporized, and relief was inadequate. One good result ensued. The famine was an object lesson on the necessity for irrigation, and the outcome was the construction of the great Ganges canal fertilizing the country between the Ganges and the Jumna.

Admittedly peace and good order were maintained; justice was equally administered and easily accessible; person and property were safe; systematized murder in the shape of thuggee had been stopped. The officers of government devoted themselves with unremitting energy to ascertain and preserve the landed rights of the tenantry and to protect them against oppression. But few of the material benefits of civilization had reached the villages, in which for the most part government was represented only by the tax-collector and the policeman.

'Beyond the boundary of our military and civil stations', wrote Sir William Sleeman, 'we find as yet few indications of our reign or character to link us with the affections of the people. There is hardly anything to indicate our existence as a people or a government in this country; and it is melancholy to think that in the wide extent of country over which I have travelled there should be so few signs of that superiority in science and arts which we boast of, and really do possess, and ought to make conducive to the welfare and happiness of the people in every part of our dominions. The people and the face of the country are just what they might have been had they been governed by police officers and tax-gatherers from the Sandwich Islands capable of securing life, property, and character, and levying honestly the means of maintaining the establishments requisite for the purpose.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished letters.

<sup>2</sup> *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official* (1893), vol. ii, p. 31. The manuscript of this work was completed in 1839, and it was published in 1844.



Equally severe and much more sarcastic was the judgement of Sir Henry Lawrence, who wrote to Lord Stanley in 1854:

"While our oldest Indian possessions have scarcely a road worthy of the name, not a railway, not a canal, and while we have done as little for them morally as physically, our philanthropists desire to annex all native states for the good of the people."<sup>1</sup>

Wherever he went, Sir William Sleeman found monuments of a great government that had passed away, but the British had not maintained the Mughal tradition of building. There was no little truth in the remark that the Jats and Marathas had done nothing but pull down and destroy and that the British seemed to have no pleasure in building anything but courts of justice, jails, and factories. Not only did they fail to emulate the Mughals as great builders, but they were guilty of gross acts of vandalism. The Marquess of Hastings, for example, tore out the marble bath from Shah Jahan's palace at Agra in order to send it as a present to George IV, but he never carried out his intention and it was sold by auction under the orders of Lord William Bentinck. Stately buildings were put to utilitarian uses, as barracks, public offices, &c.; some were demolished and their stones used for metalling the roads or as material for new buildings. It was not till long later that James Fergusson and Sir Alexander Cunningham undertook a crusade against the unholy triumphs of the barrack builder and military engineer and a policy of conservation was adopted. This came to fruition under Lord Curzon, who, as he himself said, having visited the ancient monuments of India as a pilgrim at the shrine of beauty, charged himself with their custody and maintenance as a priest in the temple of duty, looking on their repair as an offering of reverence to the past and a gift of recovered beauty to the future.<sup>2</sup>

The Directors of the East India Company have been said to have regarded the construction of a road or a canal as an unavoidable evil to be undertaken only when it could be postponed no longer; and though much was done during the last thirty years of their administration to remove this reproach, roads fit for vehicular traffic were still few and far between, and only a few large irrigation schemes had been undertaken. Except for the abolition of slavery the State had not attempted to revolutionize social economy. Beyond the prohibition of suttee it had done little to change usages sanctified by religious sentiment. An Act passed in 1856, it is true, sanctioned the remarriage of widows, but it was practically inoperative, for the sentiment against remarriage among the higher

<sup>1</sup> J. L. Morison, *Lawrence of Lucknow* (1934), p. 276.

<sup>2</sup> The Earl of Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon* (1928), vol. ii, pp. 332-3.

castes was so strong that few took advantage of its provisions, and it made no difference to those low castes which already allowed widows to remarry. Another Act protected converts to Christianity by preventing loss of property and rights of inheritance in consequence of a change in religion, but the number of converts was so comparatively small that the mass of the people was unaffected. Still these and other measures aroused an uneasy feeling of apprehension. Rumour magnified their danger and distorted their purpose, and there was a widespread fear that they were only a prelude to other unknown and unwelcome changes. Six years before the Mutiny one shrewd observer pointed out that the priests of the Hindus and the religious leaders of the Muslims were ever at work to misrepresent every act of the legislature and, by playing on the ignorance and superstition of the people, to arouse opposition to measures of reform, which in the absence of any explanation of the motives of government, were viewed with undisguised hostility as insidious attacks on caste, custom, and religion.<sup>1</sup>

The revulsion against western influences, actual or potential, was largely responsible for the mutiny of the sepoys and the partial rebellion of the people in 1857. In the words of Vincent Smith, its ultimate explanation, expressed in general terms without regard to specific grievances, was that the movement was a revolt of the old against the new, of Indian conservatism against aggressive European innovation.<sup>2</sup> The object which many undoubtedly had was to restore the old order and to make India what it had been before the obnoxious rule of the British. There was a genuine fear that government intended to christianize Hindus and Muslims alike. This idea appears to have been entertained chiefly in North India, where missionary propaganda was active and recent; the Baptist Mission alone had branches at Ghazipur, Benares, Allahabad, Cawnpore, Ajmer, Agra, and Delhi, as well as at various places in Bengal and Bihar. South India, which had been familiar with the proselytizing activity of Christian missionaries for about three centuries, was not alarmed or disturbed by it and took no part in the revolt. Little less strong was the dislike of the reduction of all classes to a dead level by the principle of equality before the law. The feeling on this point, and on the suspected intention of the government to effect wholesale conversions to Christianity, was set forth in no uncertain terms in a rebel proclamation which was found in Lucknow after its recapture in 1858. This asserted

<sup>1</sup> Lieut.-Col. J. S. Hodgson, *Mutiny on Military Matters* (Meerut, 1851), p. 43. The writer suggested the publication of pamphlets in the vernacular to explain the motives of government and prevent misrepresentation.

<sup>2</sup> *Oxford History of India* (1920), p. 725.



that it was a matter of common knowledge that four things were dear to every man beyond all else, his religion and caste, his honour, his life and those of his kinsmen, and his property. Under the rule of Indian princes all four were protected. The Hindu higher castes and the Muslim upper classes were respected. No low caste man could be equal to them or address them disrespectfully. The British, on the other hand, were opposed to all four. They wished to destroy caste and convert Muslims and Hindus to Christianity. In their eyes low castes were the equals of nobles; they disgraced the nobles in the presence of the ignoble; they summoned to their courts the gentry, Nawabs, and Rajas at the instance of Chamars<sup>1</sup> and disgraced them. The reactions of the rural classes may be illustrated by the state of affairs in the Mathura district as described by Mark Thornhill, who gives a unique picture of the trend of popular feeling. In some parts village life went on as usual and the country was a sheet of green crops, but in others there was a state of private war and general lawlessness. Village attacked village, forts sprang up, suttee and slavery were revived. 'It was evident that in its most humane and philanthropic efforts our Government had not been in harmony with the sentiments of the country.' Local grandees resumed their former state going about with cavalcades of horses and troops of retainers armed with swords and spears. The people were delighted at being able to pay off old scores on money-lenders; the latter were the only people who failed to relish the change. One large landholder declared that the three months in which British rule had ceased to exist were the happiest of his life, for he went about in state and did what he liked. He frankly admitted the benefits which the British had conferred by protecting the country against the Marathas, but pointed out on the other hand that they had interfered with old customs, while their taxation, the land revenue, school rate, and other cesses, were intolerable.<sup>2</sup>

The changes, political, social, and economic, which took place in the second half of the nineteenth century were so revolutionary that those which took place in the first half are scarcely comparable with them. Modern India may indeed be said to be practically a post-Mutiny creation owing to the alterations in the conditions of life which have followed the establishment of the *Pax Britannica*, an immense increase of population, the extension of State activities, the development of trade and industry, and the introduction of the adjuncts of modern western civilization, particularly what Lord Dalhousie called the three great engines of social im-

<sup>1</sup> Leather-dressers, an untouchable caste.

<sup>2</sup> *Personal Adventures and Experiences of a Magistrate during the Rise, Progress, and Suppression of the Indian Mutiny* (1884), pp. 114-16, 322-4.

provement, which science had already given to the West, the railways, the postal system, and the telegraph. These effected a revolution in inter-communication, breaking down geographical barriers and bringing widely separated tracts and communities into contact. Even as early as 1865 it was noticed that they were helping to effect a unification of the country. 'We are', wrote Sir Edwin Arnold in that year, 'making a people in India where hitherto there have been hundreds of tribes but no people.'<sup>1</sup> At the same time the circulation of newspapers contributed to the acquisition by the literate classes of a common stock of ideas, to which the more highly educated were enabled to give expression by their adoption of English as a *lingua franca*.

The failure of the challenge to British rule in 1857-8 had one psychological effect of far-reaching importance. Up till then there was a general feeling that the British dominion was only a temporary phenomenon. Empires rose and fell, and there seemed to be no reason why that of the British should be an exception to the general rule. Their power would pass away as inevitably as that of others, Mughals, Marathas, and Sikhs, had passed away. The Mutiny was regarded as a supreme trial of strength, and the victory of the British against heavy odds made a deep and lasting impression. 'Its moral effects were prodigious. . . . For the old conviction that luck must change the opinion gradually substituted itself that every movement for the redress of grievances, and all resistance to unpalatable innovations, would have to proceed on the assumption that the British government of India must continue.'<sup>2</sup> The fear of innovations alien to religious sentiment or actually opposed to religious canons was moreover allayed by Queen Victoria's proclamation that none should be molested or disquieted by reason of their religious faith or observances, and that there should be no interference with religious faith or worship. Preceded as it was by the Queen's affirmation of her own belief in the truth of Christianity, this assurance was more warmly welcomed than any other part of the royal message. An eye-witness in South India, describing the reactions of the people when the proclamation was read out, said that in one place the pledged inviolability of their religion and their lands spread like wildfire and was soon in every man's mouth, and that in another the impartial toleration of their religion and caste was the be-all and end-all of their comments, praise, and individual satisfaction.<sup>3</sup> Traces may, however, still be seen of the

<sup>1</sup> *The Marquis of Dalhousie's Administration of British India* (1865), vol. ii, p. 388.

<sup>2</sup> Sir H. S. Maine in *The Reign of Queen Victoria* (1887), p. 481. Sir Henry Maine wrote from personal experience of India, where he was from 1862 to 1869.

<sup>3</sup> *Speeches on Questions of Public Policy by the Right Honourable John Bright, M.P.* (1869), p. 36.



old belief in the mutability of thrones and of the instability of power, which is a legacy left by centuries of strife and unrest. On the accession of George V, there were cultivators in Bengal who inquired whether other members of the royal family were not disputing his right to the throne, and during the Great War some tenants of government estates hesitated about paying their rents on the ground that if the Germans came, they would have to pay them a second time. At the same time nationalism has developed to such an extent that it is no longer felt that movements for constitutional and other changes must proceed on the assumption that the British government must continue.

One of the most obvious changes of the post-Mutiny period was the firmer establishment of the *Pax Britannica*. In the first half of the nineteenth century there was war after war on Indian soil; after the Mutiny there was none except for the defence of the frontier, and internal peace prevailed until 1919. In that year martial law was proclaimed for the first time since the Mutiny owing to an outbreak in the Punjab, which the Government of India at the time characterized as open rebellion. This was suppressed in a few weeks, but two years later there was an outbreak of much longer duration, the Moplah rebellion in Malabar, which dragged on for nearly a year and in the course of which the insurgents massacred and outraged thousands of inoffensive Hindus and themselves lost several thousands in action. One result of the peaceful conditions which have prevailed is that communities which were distinguished for martial spirit have lost it. The composition of the Indian army is entirely different, and classes from which recruits used to be drawn have been absorbed into civil life. The Rohillas, whom Macaulay described as the best of all sepoys at the cold steel, are held to be no longer of any military value and are described in a military handbook as a degenerate race.<sup>1</sup> Marathas, who at one time lived by war, now work in fields and factories. The Telugus, whose fighting qualities first helped to win dominion for the British, are devoted to peaceful pursuits. Few of the Rajputs of Oudh and Bihar, who formed a large proportion of the Company's army, now serve as soldiers. In fact, the mass of the people of British India, outside the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, and the United Provinces, have now neither a predilection nor an aptitude for military life.

Another result of greater sociological importance is an immense growth of population which is due partly to the elimination of war and partly to other factors. In half a century, between 1881 and

<sup>1</sup> Major W. FitzG. Bourne, *Hindustani Musalmans and Musalmans of the Eastern Punjab* (Calcutta, 1914), p. 67.

1931, it has risen from 248 to 338 millions:<sup>1</sup> an area half that of the United States of America has a population more than twice as great. The increase of population is of fundamental economic importance, as it affects the whole problem of the standard of living. No lasting improvement in it can be expected so long as every increase of purchasing power is followed by a corresponding increase of population—by what Mrs. Anstey calls the devastating torrent of Indian children.

'It is', she points out, 'difficult to avoid the conclusion that no matter how productivity is increased, economic organization is improved, public health is promoted, or industrialization progresses, the standard of the masses will not and cannot be raised to a satisfactory level until changes have been introduced which will enable the size of the population to be better adjusted to economic resources.'<sup>2</sup>

Some outlet for the greater population has been obtained by the expansion of cultivation, especially in areas, such as the Punjab, where irrigation schemes have brought water to a thirsty land; but there is severe pressure on the soil in many parts, which are among the most densely populated areas in the world. Where there used to be competition among landlords for tenants, there is now competition among cultivators for land to till, and the best lands having been taken up, cultivation has spread to soils of which the yield is precarious. The growing pressure on the soil, combined with the operation of the laws of inheritance, has helped to produce fragmentation of holdings, some of which have been reduced below a subsistence level. Non-agricultural industries have done comparatively little to relieve the pressure as the increasing population is not absorbed by them. There has been great industrial expansion owing to the establishment of large-scale industries, but these are mostly concentrated in a few areas. A certain number of indigenous handicrafts have succumbed to the competition of machine-made goods of foreign or Indian manufacture, and a number of industrial workers have consequently been thrown on the land; according to the last census there are 102 million agricultural workers, but industry accounts for not more than 15 millions, only 5½ millions more than the aggregate of those engaged in service.

One of the chief factors which have contributed to the growth of population has been the cessation of famines of the old type in which millions died of starvation or of the diseases which come in the train of famine when the power of resistance is weakened by

<sup>1</sup> The figures for Burma are excluded. There are unfortunately no statistics for earlier periods. The first census was taken in 1872, but it was neither synchronous nor complete as it did not extend to a number of States.

<sup>2</sup> *The Economic Development of India* (1936), pp. 474-5.



insufficient nutrition and enfeebled constitutions. Great works of irrigation were built to protect areas liable to drought and scarcity, but a more effective measure of protection was afforded by the provision and improvement of means of transport, by a network of roads and railways, for in a great country like India there is always food in one part if there is a crop failure in another. The last famine of the old type was that which occurred in Orissa in 1866-7. This exhibited the same features as the ghastly famines of the pre-Mutiny period. Government had no famine policy and was tied to the economic doctrines of the *laissez faire* school, believing that the laws of supply and demand would operate to provide food and that any interference with them would be futile or actually mischievous. They failed to operate in the absence of means of transport. The people had the means of buying food but there was none to be had, and though government woke up at last to the situation and poured in supplies, it was too late and a quarter of the population perished. With this may be compared the course of later famines in which the mortality has been comparatively slight and the areas affected have quickly recovered. The Famine Commission of 1880 referred to the steps by which various European countries passed from 'a condition of frequently recurring famines, such as that which now characterizes India, to one in which, though high prices are at times inevitable, actual famine due to the absence of food may be said to be unknown'. India has now reached the latter stage. Famines are no longer of frequent occurrence or devastating in their effects; when they occur, the measures taken to alleviate distress are more of the nature of poor relief, such as the provision of food for a small minority and of employment for others whom the cessation of agricultural operations has deprived of their means of livelihood.

The improvement and extension of means of communication had further repercussions on the economic organization of the country, different parts of which became increasingly interdependent. In the absence of adequate facilities of transport the trade in agricultural produce, the staple of India, had been conducted in small local markets and prices were subject to extraordinary variations from place to place and from year to year. Bumper crops produced local gluts and a precipitous fall in prices; the supply might exceed the demand to such an extent as to make surplus stocks unsaleable. Elsewhere, there might be short crops and high prices, of which distant cultivators were unable to take advantage so long as the markets in which they prevailed were inaccessible. With the advent of railways the control of the grain trade, which was in the hands of small local dealers, passed to large firms operating from commercial centres, whose agents spread

through the countryside. Prices were levelled or equalized, so that there were no longer such annual and local variations. In addition to this, exports increased after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, and trade, becoming subject to international influences, was ruled by world prices. India was no longer the sole consumer of its own produce but came into competition with the other agricultural countries of the world.

The improvement of communications has had far-reaching effects. It has opened up the country and facilitated internal movements, which may be large enough to affect the composition of the population in undeveloped or partially developed tracts. During the twenty-five years ending in 1931, for instance, over half a million persons moved from eastern Bengal to the Assam Valley, and this invasion by land-hungry Bengali immigrants is said by the census superintendent of Assam to be likely to change the future of that province and to destroy more surely than did the Burmese invasion of 1820 the whole structure of Assamese civilization and culture. Facilities of transport have moreover affected the organization of village life. As the villages lost much of their isolation, there was an increased mobility of labour, which was attracted by the demand for it in towns and cities, in commercial and industrial undertakings, and by the higher wages offered by them. Artisans and labourers were no longer tied to the village of their birth or their ancestral occupation, but went further afield, where they obtained better prices for their wares or their labour. The economic equilibrium of the village community was consequently upset by outside competition and the inter-relations of its members with the village servants were altered. The latter began to work for individual employers instead of for the village as a whole, and to receive cash payments for their services instead of a customary share of the crops. Contract, in fact, tended more and more to take the place of status, not without advantage to the village menial, who had received a mere modicum, and, being every man's servant, had little independence of life and action.

A further inroad on the social structure of the village and its traditional routine was made by the activities of the State, as the system of government became more closely organized and, by undertaking functions which had hitherto been left to the villagers themselves, impinged on their life to an extent of which they had had no previous experience. The old customary régime was changed by the application of the western idea that the people should be thoroughly governed for their own good, which ran counter to the traditional view that the less people are governed, and the more they are left to live their own lives in their own way,



the better. Special departments were created for different branches of the administration, such as education, excise, forests, &c., each with its staff of officials, who came into contact with the rural population. The village communities were no longer left to manage their communal affairs without supervision. Some of the functions which they had exercised were either taken over or controlled by officials, while the rates necessary for their discharge, which had been voluntary contributions assessed and levied by the villagers themselves, became a State demand. The status of village functionaries was changed as they were given a quasi-official position and were no longer answerable to the village community of which they had been the representatives or servants.

The foundations of collectivism on which the village community was based were further weakened by the system of land revenue administration which, to an increasing extent, substituted individual for communal responsibility: in other words, individual holdings were assessed separately, whereas formerly the village was assessed as a whole, the quotas to be paid by each family being determined by the villagers themselves. A subsidiary factor has been the recognition of rights of private ownership in land. Formerly the cultivator had a right only to the produce of it and had no title to the soil; even in times of scarcity or famine he sold his cattle and chattels but not the land comprised in his holding. Land, however, has now become a marketable commodity and can be mortgaged, sold, or otherwise disposed of. Transfers of land have become common and outsiders have consequently come into the village who had no previous connexion with it, the peasant proprietors in many cases being displaced by capitalist landlords who sublet to tenants. The intrusion of this new and incongruous element has done much to destroy the homogeneity of the village community and to weaken the solidarity which it possessed. Although, however, these different subversive influences have operated to undermine the social structure of the village community in many parts of British India, it has retained vitality in the States where the rulers have followed the traditional policy of non-intervention in village affairs. Here for the most part the village council still acts as a tribunal for the adjudication of petty cases, the villagers raise their own taxes for communal purposes, and the village policemen are under their control, the State police only intervening in cases beyond their capacity.

With the acceptance of British rule as a settled fact a growing sense of unity was generated. The union of all the peoples of India under the rule of a universal sovereign has always been an Indian ideal expressed in the saying that all its races should be under one umbrella, but it was, so far as history can be traced, an

ideal only partially realized, as for instance under Akbar. Political unity was now secured by subordination to one supreme authority and common allegiance to the Crown, even though a large part of India was not directly under British rule. The Crown was more than a symbol of unity during the long reign of Queen Victoria, in whose case the traditional Indian reverence for a sovereign—the idea that divinity doth hedge a king—was combined with deep admiration for her personal qualities. She was looked up to as a shining example of virtue in high place; the secluded life which she led for many years after the death of the Prince Consort conformed to Hindu ideas of what a widow should do; there was a belief that she straitly charged every Viceroy to be kind to Indians. Even during her lifetime she received a kind of apotheosis. Hindu women are known to have prayed to her for sons. Sir Walter Lawrence tells us that towards the end of her reign a State pandit in Kashmir was deprived of his office and banished from the State because he jocularly remarked that she was a human being like himself.<sup>1</sup> Another unifying factor was the administrative symmetry due to a common system of government and common codes of law, not to mention a common system of taxation. This, however, does not apply to the States, of which the distinguishing feature is not uniformity but diversity, some being patriarchal or quasi-feudal in character, others under autocratic government, while others acknowledge constitutional principles and have remodelled their administration on lines followed in British India.

Last, but not least, of the unifying influences has been the spirit of nationalism, which has been evoked largely by the diffusion of political ideas derived from the West and by the freedom of speech allowed under British rule. This is a new phenomenon in India, where hitherto there were sectional and regional loyalties but no all-Indian feeling of patriotism. With all her contributions to human progress in religion, philosophy, literature, and art India had not been able to develop the idea of national unity. Previous governments had been supported not by any feeling of nationalism, such as that which characterizes modern European states, but merely by the power of the sword and the strength derived from the revenues; and though there were nationalist movements, such as those of the Marathas and Sikhs, they were confined to separate communities or races. After the establishment of British rule there were naturally many who desired to restore Indian rule of the old type and to recover place and power for themselves. Warren Hastings had recognized the need of associating Indians with the administration and put his principles into practice, but his policy was reversed by Lord Cornwallis, and for more than forty years

<sup>1</sup> *The India We Served* (1928), p. 249.



the system of government was one in which, as Lord William Bentinck pointed out, there was an iron hand of power on the one side, monopoly and exclusion on the other.

'In many respects', he wrote, 'the Muhammadans surpassed our rule; they settled in the countries which they conquered;<sup>1</sup> they intermarried with the natives; they admitted them to all privileges; the interests and sympathies of the conquerors and conquered became identified. Our policy, on the contrary, has been the reverse of this, cold, selfish and unfeeling.'

In 1833 new principles were enunciated by the Committee of Parliament which made the usual periodical inquiry into the administration of the East India Company. It recognized that the employment of Indians in none but subordinate posts was a legitimate grievance and that their exclusion from a larger share of government was not warranted on the score either of incapacity or of untrustworthiness. It held that it was an indisputable principle that the interests of Indian subjects should be consulted in preference to those of Europeans whenever the two came into competition and urged their admission, under European control, to the higher offices. This recommendation was implemented by the Charter Act of 1833, which laid down that no native of British India should be debarred by reason only of religion, place of birth, descent, or colour from holding any place, office, or employment under the Company. It was thus recognized that there should be no exploitation of a subject race for the advantage of the ruling race, but there was, needless to say, no idea of representative government. Even in the case of the colonies such a principle was not as yet conceded, the general view at the time being that local responsible government and the sovereignty of Great Britain were incompatible. It is true that some enlightened administrators, such as Sir Thomas Munro and Mountstuart Elphinstone, had advanced the view that the people should be trained for self-government by employment in responsible and important positions, so that eventually, when sufficiently enlightened, they might frame and conduct a regular government for themselves; but they do not seem to have envisaged anything more than government by those who were considered the natural leaders of the people, such as princes, nobles, and great landlords, as in England, where power at the time they wrote was still in the hands of a landed oligarchy.

<sup>1</sup> The same view was expressed by Indians. Sir Salar Jang, the Prime Minister of Hyderabad, for example, observed that none of the predecessors of the English were so utterly foreign to the country; with all their faults they had settled among and amalgamated themselves with the people, which the English with all their virtues could never do; and this was the most insuperable of the objections to British rule.

It was after the enactment of the Charter Act of 1833 that the idea of establishing a parliamentary system of government first began to take root in the minds of a few Indians who had received a western education. Five years after that Act had been passed Sir Charles Trevelyan observed that, whereas at Delhi the general desire was for the expulsion of the English and the re-establishment of an Indian government, in Bengal the educated classes, instead of thinking of cutting the throats of the English, were aspiring to sit with them on the grand jury or on the bench of magistrates, and the most sanguine looked forward to the establishment in the distant future of a national representative assembly.<sup>1</sup> Some indeed had more than a vague aspiration and contemplated an earlier consummation of their hopes. In the same year, Prasanna Kumar Tagore gave public expression to the belief that the surest way of establishing British rule on a firm basis was the exercise of political privileges, as in England, and that the day was fast approaching when the difference between conquerors and conquered would disappear and Indians would be treated as fellow subjects of the Crown.<sup>2</sup> General principles of this kind were supported by practical proposals for a gradual advance in the path of political progress. Thus, the Madras Native Association, the Bombay Association, and the British Indian Association submitted in 1853 that the time had come for Indians to be given a larger part in the government of their country by being admitted to legislatures and to a greater share of administrative posts.

The seeds of representative institutions were sown eight years later by an Act which reformed the legislatures and gave Indians a few places on them. This small advance gave a stimulus to the demand for political rights, which was further quickened by the spread of higher education, by growing familiarity with European political thought, and, above all, by the Press. The early Indian newspapers had taken little interest in political questions with the exception of the *Reformer*, which was founded by Prasanna Kumar Tagore in 1831. This paper, the first English paper under Indian control and management, assumed a tone of opposition to the government, published articles on the abstract rights of the people of India as members of a great polity, and proposed a constitution combining Indian oligarchy with republicanism as a panacea for all its ills. Other papers concentrated on educational, social, and religious questions, social reformers taking a prominent part in journalism; the publication of a newspaper which would voice his views seems indeed to have been part of a reformer's life. Up to

<sup>1</sup> *On the Education of the People in India* (1838), p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> J. K. Mazumdar, *Indian Speeches and Documents on British Rule* (1937), pp. 49-50.



1830 suttee was the main theme of discussion, but that subject having been exhausted, the vernacular Press languished. In 1836, when the Indian Press had had thirty years of life, John Clark Marshman, who was closely associated with it, complained of the withering indifference of the Indian public, and of an apathy so great that, though monthly subscriptions did not exceed two shillings (one rupee) a month, many of the richest men objected to paying even that exiguous sum.

Shortly before the Mutiny a few vernacular papers began to take up the discussion of political questions and to assert the right of Indians to the exercise of political rights and to a larger share of the higher administrative posts. After the Mutiny politics became a popular theme. The number, circulation, and influence of the papers increased. They were no longer published only in capital cities like Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, and Allahabad, but sprang up in small towns in the interior. By 1879 there were twenty papers published in English, which had become the lingua franca of the educated classes, and about 200 in Indian languages. The voice of the vernacular Press became more united and clamant, and it affected not only Indian opinion, but also, with the added influence of the English Press, opinion in England. Indian opinion had begun to be recognized as a power with which government had to reckon.<sup>1</sup>

The nascent spirit of nationalism was fostered at the same time by political associations such as the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha (1870) and the Indian Association (1878). The latter originated in Bengal, which at this time was said to rule public opinion from Peshawar to Chittagong,<sup>2</sup> but branches were quickly started at Lahore, Meerut, Allahabad, Cawnpore, and Lucknow. Madras held aloof from the movement. Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea, one of the founders of the Association and the most active propagator of its ideas, who visited Madras in 1878 in the course of a tour, found that it was the only place in India where it was impossible to hold a public meeting.<sup>3</sup> This Association is of special interest as showing the infiltration of European ideas, originating not so much in English as in Italian thought. One of its main objects was the unification of the people of India on the basis of common political interests and aspirations, and this idea was derived very largely

<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry Maine, the Law Member of Council, wrote in 1868 to Dr. George Smith: 'We are beginning more and more to be conscious of the reflex action of Indian opinion, which is mainly formed by the newspapers, which penetrates to England in a variety of ways, which thus leavens or creates English opinion about India, and so becomes a real power with which we have to count.' G. Smith, *Twelve Indian Statesmen* (1897), p. 308.

<sup>2</sup> H. J. S. Cotton, *New India* (1904), p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> *A Nation in Making* (1925), p. 30.

from Mazzini, as was specifically stated by Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea.

'The idea that was working in our minds was that the Association was to be the centre of an all-India movement. For even then, the conception of a united India, derived from the inspiration of Mazzini, or at any rate of bringing all India upon the same common political platform, had taken firm possession of the Indian leaders in Bengal.'

He himself had the life and work of Mazzini translated into Bengali, so as to place them within the reach of those who did not understand English, and claimed that he soon popularized Mazzini among the young men of Bengal.<sup>1</sup> Another potent influence was Gladstonian Liberalism, which had a glamour for the intellectual *élite* that lasted till the present century. Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea himself was a political disciple of Gladstone and an ardent admirer of Burke, in whom he found a model of oratorical style and a treasury of political thought.

The Indian Association was only the forerunner of the Indian National Congress, which was founded in 1885 on the initiative of a retired member of the Indian Civil Service, Allan Octavian Hume. He is consequently known in India as 'the father of the Indian National Congress', but it is scarcely necessary to point out that he acted in co-operation with Indian politicians. The Congress met a demand, which had long been in existence, for an organization for the expression of Indian opinion on political questions, for which there was insufficient scope in the legislatures as then constituted. It was not a permanent body, but merely met for a few days each year to discuss public affairs. Its immediate objects were the reform of the legislatures and Civil Service, the former of which were to be made more representative and the latter more Indian. Its ultimate objects were the political education of the people and the establishment of a form of responsible government. Its basic principle was 'India for the Indians', but it cannot be said to have been truly national at the outset, for it was not representative of all classes and communities but was mainly Hindu in composition with a sprinkling of Muslims and Parsis and some English sympathizers. With a few exceptions the Muslim community took no part in the movement, but resolved to abstain from political agitation, under the leadership of Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan, who founded an anti-Congress association. The Congress also failed to obtain support from the great body of Hindu conservative opinion, which was opposed to western democratic ideas and had a deep-rooted antagonism to the principles on which western society was built up. The idea that each human

<sup>1</sup> *A Nation in Making* (1925), pp. 41, 43.



being should be treated as a unit of equal political and social value ran counter to immemorial tradition and practice; as remarked by the Maharaja of Benares in 1888: 'Democracy is an occidental idea. A Hindu cannot comprehend it as long as he is a Hindu. It is against his religious belief. . . . So long as Hindus remain in Hindustan you cannot succeed in extending the democratical idea.' In spite, however, of active opposition or passive indifference, the nationalist movement spread, with the Congress serving as a centralizing agency; like Aaron's rod, it swallowed up other rods. Political consciousness was quickened by western methods of agitation; the lesson of Daniel O'Connell that everything depends on agitation was learnt and applied. 'The art of agitation', wrote a Parsi observer, 'was introduced with all its western machinery. Monster meetings and monster petitions became common, the platform became an institution. The pamphlet and the placard were put to new uses.'

At the same time that this movement was in progress, and the introduction of western principles of government was being urged with increasing insistence, there was a renaissance of Hinduism, which was inspired by reaction against western influences. Three distinct religious movements sprang up; viz. the Arya Samaj in North India, which was founded by Dayanand Saraswati in 1875, the Ramakrishna Mission in Bengal, which was started in 1897 by the disciples of Ramakrishna Paramhansa under the leadership of Swami Vivekananda, and the Theosophical Society in South India. The last was a foreign importation, for it was founded in New York in 1875 by the Russian Madame Blavatsky and the American Colonel Olcott; it made its head-quarters three years later at Adyar in Madras, where it was developed by an Englishwoman, Mrs. Annie Besant. It had many western features, its declared objects being the creation of a universal brotherhood without distinctions of race, caste, colour, or creed, the study of Aryan and other eastern religions and cultures, and the investigation of the laws of nature and the psychical powers of man; but its distinguishing features were its championship of Hindu ideals and practices, its recognition of the doctrines of Karma and transmigration, its idealization of India's past, and its anti-Christian bias.

The great majority of educated Hindus, however, became members of none of these bodies, but were content with a refined form of Hinduism, which came into vogue under the name of neo-Hinduism and which may be regarded as due to the interaction of western and Hindu influences. It was Hindu in intellectual belief but not necessarily in practice, external forms being re-

<sup>1</sup> R. P. Karkaria, *India: Forty Years of Progress and Reform* (1896), p. 93.

garded as of little account and social heterodoxy as not incompatible with intellectual Hinduism. The *Vedas* and other scriptures underwent critical examination and were interpreted in the light of reason, those portions being rejected which clashed with standards of modern western thought, while their higher spiritual conceptions, whether theistic or pantheistic, were retained. There was no longer felt to be any need to secede from Hinduism and join such a body as the Brahmo Samaj, an organ of which admitted in 1886: 'There was a time when the moulding of the moral and spiritual aspirations of the rising generation of educated young men was entirely in the hands of the Brahmo Samaj, but their eyes have been diverted from Brahmoism by a so-called revival of a form of neo-Hinduism.'<sup>1</sup> 'Neo-Hinduism', it was said in 1894, 'is becoming the creed of educated India.'<sup>2</sup>

When English education was first introduced, the Indian youth, who imbibed English thought through the channel of English literature, made it the summit of their ambition to resemble the English.

'Familiarly acquainted with us by means of our literature, the Indian youth almost cease to regard us as foreigners. They speak of our great men with the same enthusiasm as we do. Educated in the same way, interested in the same subjects, engaged in the same pursuits with ourselves, they become more English than Hindus, just as the Roman provincials became more Romans than Gauls or Italians.'<sup>3</sup>

This attitude of indiscriminating admiration passed away, and there was a reorientation of thought, a new angle of vision, which cannot be better explained than in the account given by Sir Richard Temple in 1882 in *Men and Events of My Time in India*.

'They no longer accept a doctrine, secular or religious, merely because it is a result of European civilization. They search for new standards of their own outside Europe and its ways. . . . Despite their western pre-occupations it is towards their own traditions that their loving gaze is turned. Their study of Shakespeare, Milton, Bacon and Locke does not in the least diminish their reverent allegiance to the Asiatic heroes, poets, saints and law-givers of old.'

With the revival of pride in India's culture and its storied past, it was insisted that she must not become a colourless copy of Europe, but develop on Indian lines with inspiration drawn from her spiritual and cultural heritage, an idea sedulously inculcated by Swami Vivekananda, who preached that the condition of Indian national life was the conquest of the world by Indian thought.

<sup>1</sup> P. N. Bose, *A History of Hindu Civilization during British Rule* (Calcutta, 1894), vol. i, p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> C. E. Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India* (1838), p. 190.



European culture was no longer regarded as superior, and the idea was implanted that instead of India learning from Europe, Europe had much to learn from India. The cry was raised that the East is spiritual and the West material. No cliché perhaps has had such a wide influence except possibly the saying that good government is no substitute for self-government. It has been taken to be an axiomatic truth, the denial of which by a European creates genuine surprise. It is an *idée fixe*, which colours and helps to distort the views of the educated classes, some of whom are inclined to doubt whether anything good can come out of Europe.

While Hindu thought was swinging away in reaction against western influences, a movement in the opposite direction set in among the Muslims. English education had hitherto been regarded with mistrust and dislike as being divorced from religion and alien to Islamic culture, which made the Indian-born Muslim conscious that he was one of an international confraternity. The idea of purely secular education was opposed to the tradition of Islam, and it was feared that its rationalizing tendencies would undermine the foundations of faith. But experience had shown that English education was a valuable qualification for admission to, and promotion in, government service, as well as for success in other walks of life, and that by abstention from it, the Muslims had fallen into a position of inferiority to the Hindus. There was a growing realization among an influential section that in their own interests they must fall into line with their Hindu competitors and march with the times. This change of front was due very largely to the enlightened guidance of Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan, a man of outstanding personality, who was convinced that the adoption of western learning was essential for the welfare of his co-religionists. Islamic culture, however, was to be preserved and harmonized with western learning; education was not to be divorced from religion, and moral training was to go hand in hand with scholastic instruction. The immediate outcome of his efforts was the foundation in 1877 of the Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, which embodied his ideas and introduced a new element in the upper strata of Indian Muslim society by producing men who were equipped to preach 'the gospel of free inquiry'.<sup>1</sup>

The keynote of earlier reforming movements had been 'Back to the Koran', their object being to restore the pristine purity of Islam by abolishing later accretions and superstitious practices. The new school of thought held that rationalistic principles should be applied to the interpretation of the Koran, whose simplicity had

<sup>1</sup> At the opening ceremony Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan said that the purpose of the college was to turn out men who would 'preach the gospel of free inquiry, of large-hearted tolerance, and of pure morality'.

been distorted by what Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan called 'empty distinctions and subtleties, metaphysical propositions, and arguments of logic'. It was to be interpreted not according to the letter but the spirit—the spirit of Islam—and the reform of the social system, in such matters as polygamy, divorce, and purdah was held to be not incompatible with its precepts and injunctions. This doctrine was, however, hotly opposed by Muslims of the old conservative school to whom the idea of a 'gospel of free inquiry' was anathema. As in the case of the Hindus, there was a cleavage between the two sections, one of which was responsive to western influences, appealed to reason, and claimed the right of private judgement and interpretation, while the other clung to authority, tradition, and custom, and regarding free interpretation of the Koran as a mutilation of the Word of God, looked on liberalizing Muslims as friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.

So long as Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan was alive his co-religionists adhered to his political creed. With a few exceptions they took no active part in political life, and maintained an attitude of persistent opposition to the National Congress. This was regarded as a predominantly Hindu body, and the nationalist movement as intended to serve only Hindu interests. A feeling, however, grew up that just as Muslim interests had suffered from their abstention from English education, so their political future was jeopardized by holding aloof from political life; and in 1906, eight years after the death of Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan, the All-India Muslim League was organized for the protection of Muslim interests. Except for a few temporary *rapprochements* with the Congress party, the Muslims still continued in opposition to it; but there was an infusion of the spirit of nationalism, the end in view being recognized as the government by Indians of their own country under a system of responsible government subject to the proviso that no constitution would be acceptable which did not make special provision for the Muslims as a separate community.

Among the Hindu literati the reaction against western influences on the one hand and the desire for a western system of self-government on the other operated to produce what was called Indian unrest.<sup>1</sup> The western-educated class, which had increased rapidly with the establishment of universities and the multiplication of colleges, demanded that the principles of western democracy

<sup>1</sup> A graphic account of this was given by Mr. Karkaria in 1896: 'In schools and colleges and universities, in debating clubs and associations; in literature, in newspapers and pamphlets, plays and novels; in public life, in municipalities and legislative councils; in private life, in after-dinner talk and friendly converse; in short, in all departments of life this new tendency, this mental unrest and dissatisfaction with the present order, is the one thing conspicuous.' *India: Forty Years of Progress and Reform* (1896), p. 94.



should be applied to the system of government. The very class which, it had been expected, would be the firmest supporter of British rule, now proved to be its most hostile critic. Politics became an obsession, and racial feeling took a strong anti-European bias. Rancour and animosity were fostered by a section of the vernacular press, which carried on a kind of journalistic vendetta against the government and whose columns became almost a daily hymn of hate.

An extraordinary stimulus to Indian nationalism came not from the West but from the East with the victory of Japan over Russia in 1905. The victory of an eastern over a western power had wide repercussions. It was welcomed as sounding the knell of European domination over the East. India, it was felt, might develop nationhood and attain national power in the same way as Japan, the secret of whose success lay in national unity and individual capacity for self-sacrifice. Above all, it seemed that her victory proved that Asiatic civilization and the retention of an Asiatic culture were no obstacle to the progress of a nation, provided it adopted western methods of organization. The inference was drawn that though modern European methods should be applied to the political, educational, and commercial systems of India, there was no necessity for any cultural transformation or for the abandonment of Hindu ideals in religious and social life. At the same time political developments in other parts of the world were closely watched, such as the Home Rule movement in Ireland, the grant of self-government in South Africa, and the combination of its colonies in the Union. The phrase of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman that good government is no substitute for self-government was regarded as an infallible truth. The declaration in favour of the right of self-determination which was made by representatives of the allied powers during the Great War was taken as applicable to India.<sup>1</sup>

One outcome of the growing determination that India must be raised to a position in which she would be mistress of her own house, and able to control her destinies, was the development of economic nationalism, yet another idea borrowed from the West. The desire to make India economically independent was an adjunct to political ambitions both among moderates and extremists. A section of the latter set on foot a very different movement. Im-

<sup>1</sup> Interest in events taking place in the outside world was no new thing. For example, after the American War of Independence the Parois of Bombay were discussing the questions raised by England's loss of her colonies; interest was taken in English politics and a leaning was shown to Whiggism; in 1823 Raja Ram Mohan Ray gave a dinner in the Town Hall of Calcutta to celebrate a revolution in Spain. But foreign affairs had not been regarded as having a direct bearing on Indian problems.

patient of the slow advance made by constitutional and peaceful methods they aimed at a quicker approach to the goal by means of revolution. A terrorist party came into being whose programme, as defined by Mr. G. K. Gokhale in 1908, was 'to stir up disorder and have recourse to every practicable form of violence because it regards any disorder or misery, or even anarchy itself, as preferable to the presence of the foreigner in the land'.<sup>1</sup> It was saturated with hatred of the British government and its representatives and agents; its weapons were the bomb and revolver, which were used for the purpose of assassination; funds were raised by robbery under arms; the laws of British India were said to be no more binding than those of Matabeleland, and were to be defied and violated in obedience to what was held to be a higher duty. The doctrines of western writers furnished arguments to justify these tactics, and the catchwords of foreign revolutionary movements were pressed into service. Lajpat Rai published a life of Mazzini, and Vinayak Savarkar a Marathi translation of Mazzini's autobiography, which soon became popular in Bombay. The history of the Italian *risorgimento* was carefully studied; a Young India Society started in imitation of Mazzini's Young Italy, and the cry of India for the Indians echoed that of Italy for the Italians. The precedent of the French Revolution was quoted. The most violent of Kossuth's doctrines were adopted. The term War of Independence was taken from the United States; the boycott was a weapon borrowed from Ireland. The secret organization of Russian Nihilism was copied, and in later years a programme like that of Bolshevik Russia was formulated.

While, however, it adopted methods which had been employed in the West and borrowed largely from its vocabulary of revolutionary agitation, the movement was suffused with the religious thought of Hinduism. It owed much of its motive force to the Hindu belief that God reincarnates Himself from time to time for the salvation of the world—an idea expressed in the *Bhagavad-gita*, in which Krishna announced: 'As often as virtue declines or vice increases I create myself anew, and I appear again from age to age for the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of virtue.' This belief was constantly expressed in the writings of revolutionaries. It was commonly stated that the age was one of unrighteousness, in which the Indian nation was losing moral and intellectual power; but God would descend in the midst of His people and destroy unrighteousness. This conception, by a curious association of ideas, led to a kind of deification of the spirit of nationalism. 'There is', wrote one ardent nationalist, 'a creed to-day in India which calls itself Nationalist,

<sup>1</sup> Earl of Ronaldshay, *An Eastern Miscellany* (1911), p. 243.



It is not a mere political programme, but a religion. . . . Nationalism is an Avatar and cannot be slain. The powers of evil cannot destroy the Lord Krishna.<sup>1</sup>

The nationalist movement did not affect the masses of the people till after the Great War. It was a common experience of agitators that purely political propaganda met with little or no response from the villagers, who were repelled, rather than attracted, by a cult of violence. It was not till 1919 that the movement spread to the rural areas as the result of intensive propaganda<sup>2</sup> and, still more, the extraordinary influence of Mr. Gandhi. Mr. Gandhi himself owed much to western education and thought. An English barrister, he had had a large practice in South Africa; he had many years' practical experience of journalism as a newspaper editor; he had the western technique of political agitation at his fingers' ends; he had studied and been deeply impressed by the literature of the West.<sup>3</sup> He was, however, completely convinced of the superiority of Indian spirituality over western materialism and proclaimed that India must unlearn much of what she had already learnt from the West and find salvation in a pristine simplicity of life. Others merely idealized the past; Mr. Gandhi preached that India must go back to it—a very different thing from dreaming of it. His Utopia would be free from the adjuncts of the industrial age, such as mills and factories, which are anathema, and it would be without many of the inventions of applied science, such as the printing-press, the telegraph, the railway, and motors, though he recognized that the time was not yet ripe for their complete abolition.

The secret of Mr. Gandhi's success in the political education of the masses lay in the fact that not only was he invested with the halo of a saint in popular estimation, but that he brought them a message which, while arousing a nationalist feeling, gave life to spiritual aspirations. Religious and moral teachings, true to Hindu ideals, went hand in hand with political propaganda, and national-

<sup>1</sup> C. F. Andrews, *The Renaissance in India* (1912), pp. 277, 279-80. An Avatar is an incarnation of a saviour-god.

<sup>2</sup> 'This is the first time in the history of India when the leaders seriously approached the masses. Politics were hitherto confined to the educated classes.' C. S. Ranga Ayer, *India—Peace or War* (1930), p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> According to his own statement, the New Testament awakened him to the rightness and value of passive resistance; the *Bhagavad-gita* deepened the impression, and Tolstoi's *The Kingdom of God is Within You* gave it permanent form. One of the passages in the New Testament which made a deep impression on him was 'Resist not him that is evil, but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also'. J. J. Doke, *M. K. Gandhi: An Indian Patriot in South Africa* (1909), p. 84. Another book which, he said, effected an instantaneous and practical transformation of his life was Ruskin's *Unto this Last*, a work which he translated into Gujarati. C. F. Andrews, *Mahatma Gandhi: His Own Story* (1930), p. 163.

ism was presented in a religious garb. He struck a note which vibrated in the hearts of Hindus by declaring that the *Rama Raj* would return. This is the golden age of Hinduism, on which Hindus wistfully look back, an age of peace, prosperity, and happiness, in which every family had an ample holding of land and enjoyed the fruits of its labour without the incubus of rent. At the same time he urged his hearers and readers to learn the art and beauty of self-denial and simplicity of life; and the simple garb of homespun cloth worn by himself and his followers, rich as well as poor, was not without its psychological effect. The form of agitation which he prescribed was passive resistance, a traditional means of opposition to government in India, which was variously called non-violent non-co-operation or civil disobedience. Its essence was to be non-violence, but despite his pacific doctrines it gave rise to long-continued disorder in which the law was openly defied by means of organized measures calculated to prove that the country was not being governed with the consent of its people. The unrest resulted in the creation of a class of intellectual revolutionaries; in Bengal a revolutionary mentality was said to have permeated every stratum of the literate upper class.<sup>1</sup> One phenomenon of the unrest in the younger generation was the formation of Youth Leagues and Youth Conferences of various kinds, some semi-religious and others purely political groups discussing revolutionary ideology. 'Whatever their origin and auspices such gatherings of youths always began to discuss the vital social and economic problems of the day, and generally their tendency was for root-and-branch change.'<sup>2</sup>

The fruition of the nationalist movement may be seen in the Government of India Act of 1935, which provides for a system of responsible government and for a constitution of which the foundation is the belief that the ultimate source of authority is the people. The provision made for an all-India federation is witness to the extent to which the essential unity of India is being realized, while the institution of a system of government designed to express the common will of the people of British India is a measure of the progress which has been made in their political education, though this has not gone far in the case of the rural masses. As stated in 1938 by the late Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda, the administration is in the hands of the educated classes, but the masses have hardly been touched by the new ideas.<sup>3</sup> The change in the position of the

<sup>1</sup> Note and Appendix A, dated 30 November 1933, laid by the Secretary of State for India before the Joint Parliamentary Committee. Committee's Report, vol. ii.

<sup>2</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (1936), p. 171.

<sup>3</sup> *Anatic Review*, 1938, p. 431. According to a leading article in the *Madras Mail* of 12 January 1939, the millions of peasants who inhabit the villages and



governing and governed races is evident both from the transfer of power from British to Indian hands and from the special provisions it has been thought necessary to make for the protection of British interests. Even the most careless observer cannot fail to notice how members of the former ruling race serve in subordinate capacities under Ministers throughout the provinces of British India and how they carry out their duty according to the Church of England catechism, honouring and obeying all that are in authority under the King, and ordering themselves lowly and reverently to their betters. Great, however, as is the advance, it is far from satisfying the demands of nationalists. The right wing maintains that India should have dominion status within the British Empire on the basis of the Westminster Statute. The left wing demands the complete severance of the British connexion and full independence (*purna swaraj*), and many already confidently affirm that the days of the British in India are numbered.

The demand for a western form of government was no doubt due to a genuine conviction of its merits on the part of some, and those the most influential, political leaders, but their views were not shared by others, who doubted whether such a government would be suited to the genius of the people of India,<sup>1</sup> but had no constructive suggestions as to what other form of government could be adopted. Moreover, there was a general feeling that in any case the British people would not agree to any but a democratic system. Responsible government of the modern western type accordingly came into general acceptance because no other model was proposed by any responsible group and because it represented the greatest common measure of agreement and seemed the only avenue of approach to the goal of national government, i.e. the government of British India by Indians. Until recently there was no demand for the institution of a similar system in the States, which are under Indian rulers and have not reached the same stage of political development as British India, though a certain number of the Princes in the larger States had taken steps in the direction of constitutional government by establishing representative assemblies or legislative councils. There is now an incipient demand for a

till the fields are either wholly unaware or but dimly conscious of their new importance. "The cultivator pursues his humble ways, thankful for such blessings as come to him, tolerant of much that is intolerable, victimized by the unscrupulous, and patronized by the superior. . . . His contentment is perhaps his own worst enemy"—words which recall the 'placid, pathetic contentment of the masses', of which Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford wrote in 1918.

<sup>1</sup> For example, Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, the leader of the Congress party, speaking in the Legislative Assembly in Delhi in January 1924, said: 'I do not want a system that is not native to India. What I want the Round-Table Conference to determine is a system which is native to India and of which you have no experience in Europe and America. Your experience of Europe and America will not avail you in the least to find out what system is native to India.'

fuller measure of responsible government in the States, a demand which is beginning to be voiced by those living within them as well as by the politicians of British India. Ideas overleap territorial boundaries and the political movement in British India has reactions in the States themselves, the people of which are to some extent beginning to desire that the free institutions established across the border should be reproduced in the Princes' territories. The demand is still somewhat tenuous and unco-ordinated, but it had led to unrest in some States, and some of the ruling Princes have already undertaken to revise the constitution of their States. The pace of the movement is being forced by agitation due to the Congress party, which is anxious to secure political conformity. It is being proclaimed that the system of government in the States must be assimilated to that of British India, and that there should be no half-way house between autocracy and responsible government. There are those who look forward to the time when the distinction between British India and the India of the Princes will have ceased and there will be only an India of the Indian people; and though some would retain the Princes in the position of constitutional rulers, the more extreme would sweep them away as effete institutions.

One feature of the new constitution which calls for more than a passing notice is the enfranchisement of women, a measure which is of entirely western origin. The civic equality of women is an idea which is opposed to the sociological traditions of India as it was to those of Europe till recent years. The position of women was one of age-long inferiority; individual women sometimes attained high rank and power, but these were exceptions to the general rule. Women themselves had no aspirations for equality of status; a position of inferiority to men was accepted as a natural dispensation. They had no wish to be economically independent, and the idea of appearing in public was repugnant to those who lived in the cloistered seclusion of the purdah; it clashed with all their conceptions of what was womanly modesty. Much less could they contemplate taking part in public affairs. Their horizon extended no farther than the home, where unchallenged authority was exercised by the senior woman who was head of the household, and the younger women might pass their whole lives in subordination to her rule.

The idea of women having the vote was not entertained until women had been given parliamentary electoral rights in Great Britain, and the demand for similar rights for Indian women was due to the desire of a section of highly educated and largely Europeanized ladies that India should follow the example of Great Britain. What they had in view was equality, not so much with



their husbands and brothers, as with their western sisters, and the issue was not complicated by any question of competition with men. Strange, too, as it may appear, considering that the conception of equality was diametrically opposed to preconceived ideas, it gave rise to no controversy. It was not treated as a polemical question and aroused no such opposition as the question of child marriage and widow marriage. There was no suffragette campaign as in England nor any need for it. Political enfranchisement was conceded almost as soon as it was asked for, because the decision rested with men imbued with modern western ideas who were anxious to demonstrate the enlightenment of India and to prove that in this, as in other respects, she could take her place among the advanced communities comprised in the British Commonwealth of Nations. The establishment of political equality was therefore an extraordinary innovation, and even more extraordinary is the fact that it owed its establishment to a demand from women.

The pioneers in the movement for the improvement of the social position of women had been men, such as the Bengali Brahman scholar Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar in connexion with the remarriage of Hindu widows, the Parsi philanthropist Behramji Merwanji Malabari in connexion with child marriage, and the Muslim reformer Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan in regard to the social progress of Muslim women, though the work done by Pandita Ramabai and Ramabai Ranade (wife of Mr. Justice Ranade) in the west of India should not be overlooked. The movement for political enfranchisement was, however, entirely a women's movement. It began only after the conclusion of the Great War, when the more highly educated Indian women who had come into contact with European life and thought began to organize associations on all-India and non-communal lines. The Franchise Committee appointed in connexion with the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms reported in 1919 that the social conditions of India made it premature to give women the vote. Representations were made by women's associations, and in deference to them it was provided that the franchise might be conferred on women by means of resolutions passed by the legislatures if they desired to remove the sex disqualification. Madras led the way in 1921 by passing the necessary resolution; other provinces followed suit; and in 1926 women became eligible for membership of the legislatures. The franchise, however, was limited, under half a million women having electoral rights. It has now been widely extended under the Act of 1935, by which six million women have been enfranchised. Well may it be said that enfranchisement was obtained almost before women had realized that votes were worth having, and that the

women of India, so far from having to fight a stiff battle against entrenched masculine privilege, 'have just blown their trumpets once, twice or thrice, and the walls of Jericho have fallen'.<sup>1</sup>

A certain number of women have come into prominence in public life and in the legislatures; but generally speaking it may be said that civic consciousness is a plant of recent planting and of no strong growth so far. Their interest has been greatest in issues in which women are directly concerned, such as child marriage. They have, however, taken an active part in the nationalist movement, their participation in which has had extraordinary non-political results. The spirit of nationalism penetrated behind the purdah. Zenana women were among its most ardent advocates, and many of the men who joined the movement did so under pressure from their womenkind. Women took no part, however, in its activities, and were merely passive supporters, until the civil disobedience movement was launched and Mr. Gandhi called on them for help. His call appealed to the spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion which is deeply rooted in the hearts of Indian womanhood and had a remarkable response. Thousands came out of purdah and volunteered for active service, some of them enrolling themselves in a women's corps called *Desh Seviha* or servants of the country. Gently nurtured ladies undertook menial and other work which would ordinarily have been considered degrading or unwomanly, but was now regarded as patriotic service. They attended public meetings, joined in processions, picketed shops, and cheerfully courted arrest and imprisonment, feeling that they were martyrs to their cause. The customs of centuries were not merely undermined, but shattered in a few years by the explosive force of nationalism. When the unrest subsided, some returned to the seclusion of their homes, but a great number did not. Having tasted the sweets of liberty and enjoyed freedom of action, they were unwilling to resume a sheltered but torpid life. The shock given to the purdah system shows no signs of weakening among the educated classes in the cities, where women now go to restaurants, cinemas, and other entertainments in numbers, which, though still small, would have been unthinkable ten years ago.

Women had hitherto been the chief obstacle to emancipation. Men who desired that their families should emerge from purdah found themselves baffled by the obstinacy with which they clung to it. But now women are themselves taking the initiative in increasing numbers. The wave of mass emotionalism created by the civil disobedience movement has subsided, and there is no longer the hectic excitement of mass movements; but quiet, un-

<sup>1</sup> See *Asiatic Review* (1932), p. 560; *Political India* (1932), p. 159.



assuming work is being done in connexion with infant welfare, rural welfare, and other work of social benefit. There is a new orientation of ideas due to the spirit of nationalism and to the desire that India should not lag behind in the march of progress but take her place among the progressive countries of the world. It is felt that the emancipation of women is an essential step to building up a nation, and in this connexion attention is being directed to the advance of women in other lands, more especially Turkey.

Two other movements which have sprung up since the Great War, and which owe their origin entirely to western influences, are the trade union movement and the communist movement. The years immediately following the War were years of unrest, due to economic causes, among the large labour forces concentrated in industrial centres. Industry was expanding, large profits were being made, and the demand for labour was increasing. The cost of living was rising at the same time and the earnings of workers were not adjusted with sufficient promptitude or on a scale large enough to counteract the effects of higher prices. A sense of dissatisfaction with the conditions of labour became general, for which there was no adequate means of articulation in the absence of unions organized for the purpose of collective bargaining. The weapon of the strike was by no means unknown. The years 1905 to 1908, in particular, were a period of industrial unrest, in which there were numerous strikes of employees on the railways, in the Telegraph Department, in printing-presses, and in mills and factories, some in connexion with questions of pay and conditions of work, and others as the direct result of political agitation. During these years the machinery of strikes was used effectively, but the strikes were chiefly local and isolated stoppages of work, and the workers generally were unorganized and inarticulate. They seemed unable to combine on a large scale in order to secure a common end by concerted action, and they failed to make a united and intelligible demand. As a rule no indication was given of the causes of discontent, no grievances were stated, no definite demands were formulated. In many cases the operatives simply stopped work without apparent reason and went off to concerns where they could get better wages or other material advantages.

After the War there was an awakening of labour to the necessity and value of organization and of co-operative effort for the improvement of the conditions of life and work. At first there were isolated stoppages of work of short duration, some on inadequate and even ludicrous grounds. In one case a political agitator urged the men in some works to strike, but they refused to do so; the men then struck because they had not been rewarded by their employers for staying in, and they went back to work when the

agitator undertook to take up their case. This phase passed, and organized labour associations began to come into existence. Most were little more than temporary strike committees formed *ad hoc* either to organize strikes or to arrange terms of settlement; but others were based on the model of the trade unions in England. Many of the latter were almost as ephemeral as the strike committees and were constantly in difficulties, either because they were split by internal dissensions or because of lack of funds, the men being willing enough to join them but unwilling to pay any union dues. The fittest, however, survived and became permanent institutions. A further step forward was taken in 1920, when an All-India Trade Union Congress was organized in order that the activities of individual unions might be co-ordinated and a common policy adopted.

The problem of the relations of capital and labour now became one of some urgency, and six years later the movement had advanced so far that a Trade Unions Act was passed. This, like English legislation on the subject, gave trade unions which came under its provisions protection against civil and criminal proceedings, and authorized them to maintain funds for political purposes, and provided that members might contract out of liability for subscription to them. On the other hand, unions had to be registered, to furnish audited accounts, and to have a majority of actual workers on their executive before they could take advantage of the provisions of the Act. These conditions have militated against its general application. Owing, moreover, to the general low level of education of the industrial classes the trade union movement has been directed and controlled by men who have not been drawn from their ranks but have for the most part belonged to the better educated and more experienced professional classes. A few have been altruistic social workers, whose first consideration has been the interests of the workers and the improvement of the conditions under which they work and live. More have been politicians with other axes to grind, and among them there have been communists, who have sought to utilize the movement for communist ends and subversive activities.

It is known that in 1920 Lenin and his associates in Russia adopted a 'drive to the East' policy and determined to attack the British empire by stirring up trouble in India. The Communist International set up a special branch for the dissemination of communism in India and issued a manifesto which called for a combination of proletarian revolution and peasant war in order to destroy imperialism, and summoned the workers and peasants to overthrow British rule. Emissaries were despatched to India, communist literature with revolutionary incitements was circu-



lated, money to finance a communist campaign was sent from Europe, and a small number of Indians underwent training at Moscow and Tashkent. The upshot was the formation by 1923 of groups of communists at five different centres, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Lahore, and Cawnpore. Quite apart, moreover, from Bolshevik propaganda the younger members of the intelligentsia read Karl Marx as eagerly as an earlier generation had read Mazzini. Works on the working of communism in Russia became the vogue, and vague communistic ideas were generated.

One of the first objects of the communist party was to capture the trade union movement and make it an instrument of their policy. Early in 1927 a workers' and peasants' party was formed, one of whose avowed objects was to promote the organization of trade unions and secure control of them. The ultimate aim was revolution, and in the same year the party started a paper called *Kranti*, meaning revolution. It succeeded in obtaining control of the principal trade unions in Bombay, Bengal, and Madras, and became dominant in the Trade Union Congress, which, at its annual session in 1929, appointed a communist organization in Great Britain as its agent and passed a resolution in favour of the establishment of a socialist republican government of the working classes in India. The moderate party withdrew from the Congress, and set up a separate organization, the Indian Trades Union Federation. The Trade Union Congress, further weakened by internal dissension and secessions, was described in 1933 as 'a useless and effete body' with no influence and trifling membership.<sup>1</sup> A rival body, the Red Trade Union Congress, was set up, but in 1935 this came to an agreement with the Trade Union Congress, by which the latter was accepted as the central organization and the principle of 'class struggle' was recognized. For the first ten years of its existence the Trade Union Congress did useful constructive work; as pointed out in a recent publication of the International Labour Office, it served as a national platform for the declaration of the policy of organized labour, and it was the body chosen to represent the interests of Indian labour in both national and international organizations.<sup>2</sup> It has now again become representative of all Indian trade unions by the merging in it of other bodies which had been started independently.

The communist movement has gained ground during recent years and has been active in connexion with agrarian movements in the United Provinces and Bihar. Its leaders have been found in an extremist party in the National Congress which endeavours to use it as a medium for propagating its ideas. The

<sup>1</sup> *The Indian Year Book*, 1933, p. 517.

<sup>2</sup> *Industrial Labour in India* (Geneva, 1938), p. 129.

red flag and the device of the hammer and-sickle are seen at meetings and in processions, and come into prominence during strikes; cultivators sometimes refuse to pay rent saying 'Lenin Sahib has told us not to pay', though they have no idea who Lenin was. The shibboleths of European communism are glibly repeated, often, it may be suspected, without a full understanding of their implications. Class warfare is preached, imperialism is inveighed against; Indian landlords are said to be associated with British imperialism<sup>1</sup> and their expropriation is proposed. War on capitalism and landlordism is declared to be the solution of the problem of the Indian peasantry, and collectivization of agriculture is said to be the ultimate objective, though not immediately possible. 'Marxism alone', according to a manifesto published by a socialist organization in 1936, 'can guide anti-imperialist forces to their ultimate destiny. Party members must therefore fully understand the technique of revolution, the theory and practice of the class struggle.' Modern and western as all this sounds, there is still an idea that the programme should have at least a veneer of Hinduism. Thus, *The Revolutionary*, whose sub-title was *An Organ of the Revolutionary Party in India*, set forth a few years ago that its objectives were the nationalization of railways, mines, manufactures, and shipping, and went on to make the extraordinary claim that its aims were international and that in this respect it followed the 'footsteps of the great Indian *rishis*<sup>2</sup> of the glorious past and of Bolshevik Russia in the modern age'—a collocation which is characteristic of the curious Janus-like outlook of much modern Indian thought.

<sup>1</sup> For example, the Secretary of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha (i.e. Agriculturists' Association) wrote in *The Searchlight* of 10 December 1937: 'The radical solution of the agrarian problem demands that the fight of the peasantry must be anti-imperialist and anti-feudal. Hence the Kisan movement in Bihar, as in other provinces, is directed against British imperialism and the zamindari system. Big zamindars have been powerful allies of British imperialism, which uses them as its social basis for keeping India in bondage.'

<sup>2</sup> Ancient Hindu sages who were models of wisdom and sanctity.



## CHAPTER III'

### LAW

#### INTRODUCTORY

AN attempt to trace the influences of English rule upon the legal institutions of India may properly begin with a brief survey of the conditions of that country at the time when British ascendancy was first established. The conquest of Bengal took place in the year 1757 and was followed, in 1765, by what is known as the grant of the Diwani, by which the Mughal Emperor of Delhi surrendered to the East India Company the powers of fiscal and civil administration over the three provinces of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, in which were included the right of dispensing civil justice to the whole Indian population within those areas. The grant of the Diwani was not followed immediately by the assumption by the Company of the duties and the powers thus assigned to it. Seven years were to elapse before the Directors decided that it should enter upon its functions as Diwan and address itself to the task of dispensing civil law to the peoples of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. These provinces, still under the control of the former officials, were in a condition of disorder. While the Muslim rulers had maintained some show of judicial administration, their courts of justice were in abeyance and had practically ceased to function. Jurisdiction had been seized by local potentates, corrupt and oppressive, who paid but scanty regard to the law or to any forms of justice.

In these conditions it fell to Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General, to lay the foundations of a judicial system which, with sundry alterations and amendments suggested by later knowledge and experience, has continued till the present day. The main feature of his scheme was decentralization—the establishment in the districts of the provinces of subordinate courts which should be accessible to all Indian suitors. These district (*Mufassal*) courts were placed under the judicial and administrative control of two principal (*Sadr*) courts, civil and criminal, which constituted the highest courts of appeal. These were all Company's courts, and this system, first set up in Bengal, was, in course of time, adopted by other provinces of British India as they gradually came into existence. In addition to these courts there were established the Supreme Courts, first in Calcutta and later also in Madras and

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is based in part upon the author's *Rapport* on the influences of British rule upon the legal systems of India to the Second Congress of Comparative Law held at The Hague in August 1937.

Bombay. These were King's courts, erected by royal charter in pursuance of the provisions of the Regulating Act of 1773 enacted by Parliament with the object of securing control over the affairs of the East India Company. Their jurisdiction was limited to the three Presidency towns, and the law they administered within these areas was chiefly the English law, though as regards Indian litigants they were required to apply to them their family law, according as they were Hindus or Muslims. The King's courts were distinct from the Company's courts and exercised no control over the latter.

This dual system of judicature under which justice was dispensed by two sets of courts, each independent of the other, was unsatisfactory and occasioned both confusion and hardship. In particular, the highly technical and complex rules of English judicial procedure which the Supreme Courts followed were conspicuously unsuitable for application among people living in a country where judicial institutions had ceased to function and all forms of judicial process were totally unknown. This unfortunate state of affairs, which was a serious obstacle to the development of a body of uniform territorial law, persisted till 1861, by which time the enactment of the Indian Penal Code and the Codes of Civil and Criminal Procedure made it possible to amalgamate the two jurisdictions by the establishment of the provincial High Courts, each vested with control over all inferior courts within its area of jurisdiction, and all judicially subordinate to a common court of ultimate appeal, the Judicial Committee of His Majesty's Privy Council.

The judicial machinery being thus provided, it became necessary to determine what laws these courts were to administer, a problem of some difficulty, as the laws which governed the Hindus and Muslims, who formed the bulk of the population, were, at that time, a sealed book to the Company's servants. It was understood that both systems of law were so intimately connected with religion as to render it impolitic to set them aside completely by the imposition of any system imported from abroad. In this matter English policy was initiated by Warren Hastings, who laid down that the personal law both of Hindus and Muslims was to be applied by the courts in all disputes affecting their family relations and religious institutions. This principle has been the corner-stone of the administrative structure in India, and up to the present day both these great classes of the community can claim the benefit of those portions of their laws which regulate marriage, adoption, inheritance, and other forms of succession to property, as well as disposals of property made for pious and charitable purposes.

But discovery of the legal content of both these systems had still



to be made, and this was a slow process. The labours of distinguished Oriental scholars, such as Sir William Jones and Colebrooke, gradually made available to the English judges knowledge of the laws recorded in the ancient texts and commentaries, translations of which, in the form of digests and other compilations, were published from time to time. These works, particularly those which dealt with the Hindu law, were treated at first as having an authority which they did not in fact possess. The Hindu treatises were regarded as repositories of positive law binding upon all who called themselves Hindus. Later investigations revealed the fact that they were no more than records of ancient custom moulded by the religious doctrines of a long series of Brahmin commentators, and that the rules they contained were by no means of such general application as had been supposed. It was found that there were conflicting schools of Hindu law, more or less identified with particular territories; these had arisen from divergence in the interpretation of the same early texts, with the result that there was a considerable lack of uniformity in practice in different parts of India. Moreover, the latest commentaries dated from a period several centuries anterior to the date of the British occupation, and this being so, it came to be realized that they could hardly present a true picture of the usages obtaining at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The rule of literal observance of the laws so presented to the courts which was followed at first gave way at length under the doctrine finally declared by the Privy Council in 1868 that clear proof of usage would outweigh the written text of the Hindu law.

It is unfortunate that in our attempts to trace the history of the development of the Hindu law we have no chronology to guide us; nor again have we any assistance in the shape of judicial exposition. While there is good reason to believe that under the ancient Hindu régime there were in existence judicial institutions of some kind, the fact remains that no records of their activities have been handed down to us, to show how the law was applied in practice; we have, so to speak, no history of the law in action. All our knowledge of the Hindu law is derived from a number of texts for which a divine origin is claimed and a long series of commentaries prepared by speculative jurists and theologians deeply tinged with the doctrines of Brahmanism. These Hindu treatises are in their language vague to a degree and embody a mass of conflicting opinions from which, as has often been remarked, almost any conclusion might be drawn. They have come to be regarded as a mixture of religious, civil, and moral ordinances which the priestly order considered proper to be observed but which, as a whole, were never actually administered as law.

Side by side with the Hindu system there was the Muslim system introduced into India by the Muslim invaders who occupied the country continuously from the latter end of the twelfth century. The law which they brought with them was mainly the law of the Hanafi school as settled in the tenth century and recorded in numerous works written in the Arabic language, some of which were translated into English. Positive law, as we understand it, was as much foreign to the Musalman as it was to the Hindu. His law, too, was a divine institution, sacred law derived from the Koran and the Traditions of the Prophet which no temporal authority had power to alter. It was, moreover, a law for the Faithful only and was never imposed upon the millions of Hindus in India who declined conversion to the creed of their conquerors. Even among those who were compelled or induced to embrace the new faith there were many who did not, as in theory they were supposed to do, subject themselves to the legal code of Islam. To this day large numbers of Muslims in India, the descendants of the first converts, are still governed by Hindu law and usage in matters of inheritance and succession.

#### CODIFICATION

These two systems, in force at the moment of the British occupation, were utterly different from each other and from the English system, and both were personal in the sense that they governed only those who professed one or other of the two prevailing religions. Neither interfered with the other, though only the Muslim code could be, and was, administered by the judges of the Muslim courts. The Muslim criminal law was, however, applied as public law both to Muslims and Hindus. But a new power had now risen to which the peoples of both creeds had become subject, and however fitting it was that nothing should be done to offend their religious sentiments or to disturb their social organization, it was clearly necessary to introduce a body of territorial law which should bind all subjects irrespective of their creed; and it was found that pre-existing systems could not provide the material for such a purpose. Though both of them were highly developed in some departments, as, for example, in the law of the family relations, in other respects they were deficient. Large areas of the legal field were left uncovered. There was no definite law of procedure, criminal or civil, no law of torts, no public and constitutional law. In both systems the law of contract was primitive and altogether inadequate to the requirements of the age. The Muslim criminal law was a code of barbarous severity, administered under rules of evidence which operated with the grossest injustice against those who were not of the Muslim persuasion; one of these rules forbade



acceptance of the testimony of an unbeliever against a follower of Islam.

The problem of creating a body of territorial law was one of immense complexity, and for almost a century from the date of the British occupation little was done, or could indeed be done, towards its solution. The British were during this period engaged continuously in warfare with other powers who were struggling to secure the supremacy which the Mughals had lost, and the years which passed in the gradual conquest and pacification of the territories which were ultimately annexed allowed neither time nor opportunity for making due provision for the needs of a regular civil administration by legislation of a permanent and general character. All that was possible was a system of improvised government carried on by means of Regulations framed under the legislative powers which the British Parliament conferred from time to time upon the Governor-General.

An inquiry made just prior to 1833 into the methods of government in India revealed the existence of much confusion and disorder. The state of the law, as it was then being applied by the courts, was vividly described by Macaulay in his speech on the Bill which became soon after the Charter Act of 1833. He spoke of the 'Hindoo law, Mahometan law, Parsee law, and English law perpetually mingling with each other and disturbing each other; varying with the person, varying with the place'. He pointed out how the uncertainties of the Indian systems had driven the British courts to the administration not of law but of 'a kind of rude and capricious equity', and he announced that one of the objects of the Bill was to bring about the preparation of a body of law which, while paying due regard to the feelings generated by differences of religion, of nation, and of caste, would secure 'uniformity where you can have it, diversity where you must have it, but in all cases certainty'.

The enactment of the Charter Act of 1833 was the first practical step towards the codification of the law in British India. The first Indian Law Commission, under the presidency of Lord Macaulay, was set up in 1834; its most notable achievement was the production of the draft of the Indian Penal Code, which, however, did not become law until 1860. Macaulay's Commission also drew up a number of reports which embodied proposals for legislation and which fell under the consideration of a succession of Law Commissions, which sat in England at various times between 1853 and 1870 and whose efforts led to the enactment of the Codes of Procedure, civil and criminal, in 1859 and 1861 respectively. This latter year also marked the unification of the judicial system in India by the amalgamation of the Supreme and *Sadr* Courts into

the High Courts. The later fruits of the labours of these Commissions were the Succession Act (1865), the Limitation Act (1871), the Evidence Act, and the Contract Act (1872), and still later, under the direction of the Government of India, there came the Specific Relief Act (1877), the Negotiable Instruments Act (1881), the Trusts Act (1882), the Transfer of Property Act (1882), and the Easements Act (1882). By this time, it may be said, the process of codification came to an end, though further legislation of a comprehensive character was undertaken to define the law of land tenures for the various provinces.

It should be noticed here that no attempt was made to codify any portion of the Hindu or Muslim personal law. Such a project was in the contemplation of the first Law Commissioners, but it was rejected by the Law Commission of 1853 mainly on the consideration that as both systems were identified with the religions of the people they should be left alone by the legislature. The wisdom of this decision has not infrequently been called in question but, as Sir Courtenay Ilbert has observed, the advocates of codification of Hindu and Muslim law underrate the prodigious difficulties of such an undertaking. It would be practically impossible to bring the diversities of the Hindu law inside any code; and while in the case of the Muslim law the obstacles might not be so formidable, there still remains the consideration that orthodox Islam holds firmly to the belief that legislation belongs to God alone.

Such, in outline, is the history of codification in India. The result has been the importation on a considerable scale of the English law, not indeed in unadulterated form, but divested of its anomalies and technicalities and moulded so as to render it suitable for application in conditions which are vastly different from those of England. In short, India has received much of the English law shorn of what Sir James Fitzjames Stephen describes as its 'cumbrous and pompous nonsense'.<sup>1</sup> The process of adaptation has not been easy, and, with the necessity of exempting, on religious grounds, large sections of the population from the operation of some of the Acts which have been mentioned, it cannot be claimed that all this law in its codified form is pure *lex loci*; but on the whole the objects indicated by Macaulay in his speech in 1833 have been attained.

There is much diversity of opinion concerning the advantages and disadvantages of code law. But however that may be, no one with Indian experience will be disposed to deny that codification in that country, so far as it has gone, has been of the greatest possible benefit. It cannot, of course, be claimed that the Acts

<sup>1</sup> *Minute on the Administration of Justice in British India* (Calcutta, 1872), p. 106.



which go to make up the Indian code are all of equal legal merit, and some of them have come under severe criticism.

The Indian Penal Code has been universally approved and has survived, practically without alteration, the test of experience. It has been accepted as a model of penal legislation and adopted with very little change not only in many of the native States in India which are free from British legislative control, but in many of the British possessions in the Far East and in Africa. At the time it was drafted in 1834 it was far above the level of the English criminal law of the time, which, in truth, was but little less irrational and severe than that of the Muslim code which was more or less generally applied in India, and was rendered tolerable in England only by the perverse verdicts of the juries under the encouragement of the judges of the time who were seeking a means of escape from its absurdities. The English law was a wholly unsuitable pattern for India and was wisely rejected. But it had its admirers in England, where the spirit of law reform aroused by the writings of Bentham and others had still to attain the vigour which it subsequently acquired, and the consequence was that Macaulay's draft encountered so much opposition that its enactment was delayed for a period of close on thirty years.

The Codes of Civil and Criminal Procedure, which have undergone considerable amendment from time to time, have been similarly applauded. The law of evidence and the law of contract as embodied in the Acts of 1872 have been less favourably judged. Both of these Acts were the work of a distinguished English lawyer, Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, who had a considerable knowledge of the administration of the law in India. Of the Indian Evidence Act it has been said that it is largely superfluous and perplexing. Professor Thayer of Harvard University has characterized the Act as 'a *tour de force*'—'an over-ingenious attempt to put the rules of evidence wholly into terms of relevancy'.<sup>1</sup> This opinion will receive little support from those who have had judicial experience in India and have found guidance in the Act which was not available in the English law, which Stephen not unfairly describes as 'a hopeless mass of confusion'.<sup>2</sup> It is perhaps a sufficient refutation of this adverse comment to point out that Stephen's *Digest of the Law of Evidence in England*, which is practically a word-for-word production of the Indian statute, is now recognized as a standard text-book on this branch of the law in England.

The Contract Act was, perhaps, a less successful piece of work, probably because the law of contract yields less easily to the process

<sup>1</sup> *Preliminary Treatise on Evidence at the Common Law* (Boston, 1898), p. 266, footnote.

<sup>2</sup> *Digest of the Law of Evidence* (1881), p. x.

of codification. The main reproach directed against it is that of excessive rigidity; it is complained that it leaves too little to judicial discretion. To a certain extent this criticism is well founded, for it may be admitted that the principles of the English law, which assumes that those who enter into contracts know what they are doing and are conscious of the sanctity which attaches, or ought to attach, to promises deliberately made, are likely to occasion hardship when applied to the transactions of people who are ignorant and practically illiterate.

On the other hand is the consideration that it would in India be highly unsafe to accord to the judiciary, particularly to those of the inferior courts, the measure of discretion allowed to judges in England. For the constitution of the Indian judiciary is, of necessity, very different from that of England, and the English system, however admirable it may be, could not be adapted to Indian conditions. For one thing, it would be far too expensive; India, with several thousands of judges of all denominations, is not in a position to entertain a highly paid judicial establishment recruited from the ranks of successful practising lawyers. In India candidates for judicial office have to be recruited at an early age, and the knowledge of the law that they gradually acquire is derived from experience on the Bench and not at the Bar. This being the situation, it is only proper that the margin of judicial discretion should be reduced to the narrowest limits. As Fitzjames Stephen has observed, 'the abridgement of judicial discretion by written laws may be, to some extent, an evil, but in the circumstances of India it is an inevitable evil. Discretion leads to illegality.'

Whatever criticism of codification in India can be adduced, it is, at any rate, true to say that it has served to clothe the law with certainty and simplicity, and if it has been possible to invest it with these merits only by the sacrifice of a measure of flexibility there is no need to regret the price which has been paid. In India, as elsewhere, the paramount desideratum is that the law should be certain. The results of codification in India are admirably summarized in the following passages from Lord Bryce's *Studies in History and Jurisprudence*, vol. i, p. 116:

'What has happened is that the English have given to India such parts of their own law (somewhat simplified in form) as India seemed fitted to receive. These parts have been applied to Europeans as well as natives, but they were virtually applicable to Europeans before codification began. The English rulers have filled up those departments in which there was no native law worthy of the name, sometimes, however, respecting local native customs. . . . The English have neither applied to India the more technical parts of their own law such as that relating to land, nor attempted to supersede those parts of native law which are



influenced by religion such as the parts which include family relations and inheritance. As respects codification the English have in one sense done more than the Romans, in another sense less. They have reduced such topics as penal law and procedure, evidence and trusts to a compact well-ordered shape, which is more than Justinian did for any part of the Roman law. But they have not brought the whole law together into one *Corpus Juris*, and they have left large parts of it in triplicate so to speak, that is to say consisting of rules which are entirely different for Hindus, for Musalmans and for Europeans.'

#### LAND LAW

In describing the beginnings of British rule in India it has been mentioned that in the earlier stages there was little opportunity for the introduction of legislation of a general and permanent character; the government was carried on under a series of improvised Regulations designed to meet the day to day requirements of administration. But one important measure was not of this ephemeral description, namely Bengal Regulation I of 1793 (the Bengal Permanent Settlement Regulation), the importance of which lies in the fact that it was the first of a number of enactments dealing with the land-tenures in India. The events which led up to this enactment may be shortly stated.

As has already been mentioned, it was not till the year 1772, seven years after the grant of the Diwani, that the East India Company assumed the functions conferred upon it by the grant. During this interval the government of Bengal remained practically under the control of the former officials, over whom the Company's servants exercised a supervision which was purely nominal and wholly ineffective. In 1765 Clive had estimated the annual income of the provinces at about £4,000,000—more than half of which consisted of the single item of land revenue, representing the proceeds of a tax upon lands capable of cultivation. The collection of this tax had, for a period of over half a century prior to 1765, been entrusted to a class of persons, styled zamindars, who exercised control and management over areas or districts, varying considerably in extent, which were known as their estates, and who were responsible by contract for the annual payment to the native government of the tax due from these lands. During the period between 1765 and 1772 the receipts under the head of land revenue fell short of the estimate given by Clive, and although the deficit was attributable to some extent to a severe famine in 1770, which is stated to have swept away one-half of the population of Bengal, the suspicion was entertained that it was mainly due to the peculation and corruption of the zamindars, whom the Company looked upon at first as being mere servants of the native government.

The result was that when the Company in 1772 took over the task of revenue collection the zamindars were ignored and the right to farm the land revenue was put up to auction. This method ended in failure, for the farms fell into the hands of speculators who had no territorial connexions or influence and no experience of the management of agricultural estates, and who, as often as not, defaulted in their engagements. Resort was next had to a method of direct agency; the Company appointed its own collecting agents. Here again the experiment miscarried, for the servants knew no more of the systems of tenure and the methods of cultivation than their masters. In the end the Company had to fall back upon the services of the zamindars, whose local influence and experience afforded some guarantee for the regular receipt of the revenue.

Meanwhile the unsatisfactory condition of the Company's finances had begun to attract the notice of the British Parliament. The zamindars had been loudly complaining of harsh treatment, alleging that they had been unjustly deprived of their lands and had been obliged to render oppressive rents, tributes, and services. They were little disposed to accept the position of mere salaried agents whose services the government could dispense with at its pleasure. Pitt's Act of 1784 (24 Geo. III, c. 25) accordingly directed the Company to take measures 'to settle and establish the permanent rules by which the tributes, rents and services of the Rajas, zamindars and other native landholders should be in future rendered and paid'. Inquiries regarding the position of the zamindars had already been made before the passing of this Act, and these were continued after the arrival in India in 1786 of Lord Cornwallis, who had been sent out with instructions for the settlement upon a firm basis of a revenue system which would ensure the extension of cultivation and the prosperity of the provinces, one-third of the area of which was at that time said to be still jungle. The result of these investigations was the enactment in 1793 of the Bengal Permanent Settlement Regulation (Regulation I of 1793), which gave legislative confirmation to a proclamation already issued on 22 March 1793, whereby it was declared that subject to the annual payment of land revenue as it should be assessed, the zamindars and other actual proprietors were to be deemed to have a permanent, heritable, and transferable proprietary right in their estates.

The inquiries which led up to this memorable enactment gave rise to acute differences of opinion among the servants of the Company. Speaking generally, the issue over which they were divided was the ownership of the soil in Bengal. The protagonists in the controversy were Mr. James Grant and Sir John Shore (afterwards Lord Teignmouth). The zamindars, in support of



their claim to have the revenue settlement made with them, were asserting rights over the soil which, in substance, amounted to ownership. This claim was vigorously denied by Grant, who maintained that by the law of India all property in the soil was vested absolutely and exclusively in the sovereign or the State. According to him, the zamindars were nothing more than State servants employed to collect the land revenue. Shore's opinion, to quote his own words, was that 'the rents belonged to the sovereign, the land to the zamindars'. Throughout the controversy the stress was laid upon the respective rights of the State and of the zamindar; the rights of the cultivator, though not wholly ignored, appear to have been treated as a matter of secondary importance.

The law to which appeal was made for the purpose of deciding the issue was that of the Hindu and Muslim legal systems. Of these the Hindu law was the customary law of a primitive society, the earliest known statement of which was to be found in the so-called Code of Manu. By the time this record was compiled the political organization in India appears to have consisted of the king (Raja) and his subjects. The king belonged to the second or Kshatriya caste; he represented the temporal power. As regards rights over land there is little to be found in Manu or in the codes of later dates. One verse of Manu (ch. ix, v. 44) speaks of a right in land acquired by clearing; 'cultivated land is the property of him who cut away the wood or who cleared and tilled it'. Other texts in Manu and elsewhere declare the right of the king to receive from the cultivator a share of the produce, which varied according to the nature of the soil and the labour required for its cultivation. The share was generally one-sixth, but the texts say that in seasons of distress the king could demand a one-fourth share 'without committing sin'. This right of the king to a share of the produce was based upon his position as 'protector of the soil' (*bhumipati*), in virtue of which he had, in addition to the right to a share of the produce of cultivation, a general right of control over the waste lands as head of the State. The cultivator rendered a share of his crops in return for the protection he received and, as the texts declare, was under a duty to till the land; if he failed to do so, he was bound to render the equivalent of the share of the crop which but for his default would have been available, and also to pay a fine which might amount to ten times the value of the king's share.

The most that can be deduced from the scanty material of the Hindu texts on this subject is that the king had by custom a right to a share of the produce, while the cultivator, so long as he rendered this share, had the right to be protected in the occupation of his holding. His right was a conditional right to occupy, a right which he could transmit to his heirs, and which for that reason

might be deemed a proprietary right, but one falling far short of that right of ownership which in our time has come to connote plenary powers of user, control, and disposal. There is nothing in the Hindu law to indicate that the cultivator had a right to alienate the soil of his holding, or, indeed, to suggest that there was any conception of a right in anyone to make such an alienation.

The fact is that any notion of exclusive property in land was unknown to primitive society. Land was not, in the modern sense, a subject of property; it was the source of the subsistence of the entire community after society had advanced from the nomad to the agricultural stage, a stage which, in India, had been reached by the time the law of Manu came to be recorded. At that period there was land in abundance available for cultivation, which was the only conceivable use to which it could be put, and it had no market-value to render it a subject of alienation. For the progress of society at that stage what was needed was the extension of cultivation, and that end could well be attained without resort to any notion of ownership; it was sufficient for the purpose if the cultivator was encouraged to effort by being protected in his occupation. The relation between the king and the husbandman described in Manu and the other texts of early Hindu law was not that of landlord and tenant; it was more in the nature of a partnership in the productive powers of the soil, a relation which might very well exist without the attribution of a right of ownership to either party. The free exercise of powers of alienation, which is the characteristic incident of ownership in the modern sense, was wholly unknown.

So far, then, as the Hindu law is concerned, the only rights which it recognized in connexion with the land were the right of the sovereign to a share of the produce and a right of occupancy in the cultivator who grew the crops. There is no mention whatever of the rights of any third party intermediate between the king and the peasant. The Hindu law also recognized that waste lands were at the disposal of the king as head of the State and as representing the community.

The Muslim law found its way into India during the last quarter of the twelfth century and was administered, though never in its entirety, for the six centuries which followed before the final collapse of the Mughal empire. It was a system of much later origin than the Hindu law, having been developed between the seventh and tenth centuries. As a body of law it was, as might be expected from its history, much more definite and scientific than the purely customary law of the Hindus and owed a good deal to the Roman law, many of the principles of which it incorporated in the course of its development under the guise of tradition.



The Muslim code recognized rights of private ownership in the soil; all lands in Arabia were subject to tithe ('*ushr*'), a tax levied upon the property of all Believers. As for lands outside Arabia acquired by conquest the law was not uniform; it varied according to the doctrines of the various 'schools'. Thus the law of the Shafii school was that lands in conquered territories were divisible among the victorious soldiery and on distribution became their private property and so liable to tithe. The view of the Maliki school was that conquered lands became *Waqf* property, which meant that they passed out of private ownership and became the property of the Deity and, as such, inalienable. They were to be managed by the head of the Muslim State and the usufruct derived from them was to be available to all Muslims as perpetual beneficiaries.

The law of the Hanafi school, which was that generally followed in India, was less rigid inasmuch as it allowed the ruler an option in dealing with conquered territories, the 'option of the Imam'. This doctrine of option had its origin in a tradition that Umar, the second Caliph, after his conquest of the Sawad of Iraq had, instead of dividing the lands among his troops, left them in the possession of their former occupants upon the condition of their paying a tax styled *kharaj*, which, in theory, was double the amount of the tithe payable by the Believer. This precedent was, no doubt, based upon expediency; all Muslims were wanted in the field and could not be allowed to settle down on the lands they had won. It became a rule of law among the Hanafi lawyers, who held that, once the option had been exercised, the State had irrevocably renounced all claims to ownership and had thereafter nothing more than the right to exact the land-tax (*kharaj*) from the Unbelievers left in possession, who were treated not as tenants of the State but as proprietors. The doctrine of the option of the Imam applied originally only to lands which had been taken by force; it was extended afterwards to cases where the occupiers made their submission without resistance.

The *kharaj* tax was either proportionate or fixed. Where proportionate, it was a levy upon the actual produce and was realized by a division of the crop. Where fixed, it took the form of a charge upon each unit of area calculated in accordance with the rates laid down by Umar, the maximum rate being one-half of the estimated value of the produce which could be raised, and the person in possession was liable whether there was any produce or not. The tax was due once a year, and, where default was made, the head of the State could take the land under direct management or let it out on farm. In the last resort he might sell the land of the defaulter to a third party, who thereupon acquired a good title by purchase.

From this statement of the Hanafi law it appears that a Muslim sovereign had no original title as owner of lands subject either to tithe or *kharaj*. He might, however, as head of the State, become by a supervenient title the owner of land subject to the fixed *kharaj* through use of the legal powers of expropriation where the taxpayer defaulted. The normal position was that where the option of the Imam had been exercised, the only right of the State was to receive a tax from land taken up for cultivation. Waste lands, those absolutely in a state of nature, were at the disposal of the sovereign, as they were under the Hindu law.

Neither Hindu nor Muslim legal theory therefore furnishes support for the view expressed by Grant, namely that 'by the law of India the ownership of the soil was vested absolutely and exclusively in the sovereign or in the State'. It is, indeed, not to be disputed that such a notion was generally entertained and that the Muslim rulers of India conceived themselves as possessing unlimited powers of control and disposal over the lands in their territories. But this was purely a *de facto* claim based upon the despotic authority which they exercised. In India, as in other countries which came under their rule by conquest, the Muslim sovereigns consistently ignored the rigid Islamic prohibition which denies all right to legislate to an earthly authority, and arrogated to themselves, particularly in the domain of public law, the power of making such rules as they pleased for the governance of their dominions; here the law was what the sovereign chose to make it.

On the other hand the law, Hindu or Muslim, did not justify the conclusion of Shore that the land 'belonged to the zamindars', if by this he meant that they were its owners. The Hindu law speaks only of the king and the cultivator and has nothing to say of any rights residing in a third party. The Muslim law, too, contemplates only two parties, viz. the State which received the land-tax and a person in actual possession of the land who engaged with the State for its payment, and who was treated as proprietor though not expressly declared to be so. Whatever may have been the legal theory in this matter, there is nothing in the history of the land administration during the Muslim period in India to show that the actual payment of the revenue to the State was acknowledged as a badge of ownership in the modern sense of the term.

The first settlement of the land revenue in India of which we have any reliable record was that made by Akbar in Bengal in 1582 with the assistance of his Hindu minister Todar Mal. That was a settlement made direct with the ryot (cultivator), whose contribution was fixed by an act of the State. The ryot was the



payer of the revenue and was encouraged to pay his revenue in person; the procedure was in fact a reversion to the ancient Hindu system of direct dealing between the king and the peasant. But nowhere in the records of Akbar's settlement is there any trace of a declaration, express or implied, that the ryot was the owner of his holding by virtue of his liability to pay the revenue for it. And it seems more reasonable to assume that the right of the cultivator during the reign of Akbar was no more extensive than it was in the Hindu era—a right of occupancy which was allowed to pass by inheritance. Nor again is there any evidence to show that at any other period of Muslim rule in India the State purported to confer proprietary rights upon any class of middlemen so as to place them in the position of landlords over the ryots. The patents of appointment (*sanads*) issued by the government to the zamindars conveyed no title whatever to the land.

The question then arises how this intermediary class known as zamindars came into existence, and how it was possible for them to put forward a claim to a landlord right. The answer must be looked for in the history of the revenue administration prior to the date of the grant of the Diwani.

The word 'zamindar', of Persian origin, first came into use during the days of the Mughal empire. It signifies literally 'a holder or occupier of land' but conveys no indication of the title under which the land is held in possession. It was used in various senses at different periods. It seems to have been applied at first to the holders of tributary tenures—Rajas and chiefs who had previously enjoyed such sovereign rights over the land as were then recognized and who, after submission to their conquerors, were allowed to retain their possessions subject to the payment of an agreed sum as tribute. By the time the East India Company took over control of Bengal the term had come to be applied to a person under engagement to pay the land revenue for a tract of land under his control, which was styled his 'estate'. He was the person who was personally liable to the State, and, in view of the risk he assumed under his contract with the State, he was invested with extensive powers of management and control over the lands within his jurisdiction. The East India Company itself had been the 'zamindar' since 1698 of the three villages of Calcutta, Sutanuti, and Gobindpur in the province of Bengal.

During the pre-Muslim period the State revenues were collected by the king's officials. We find in the seventh chapter of Manu a description of the administrative organization of the Hindu kingdom. The smallest territorial division was the village (*grama*), a defined area occupied by a body of settlers consisting of cultivators belonging to the third caste (Vaisyas) and a number

of village menials of the lowest caste (Sudras). The two higher castes, the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas, were not supposed to engage in cultivation except in seasons of distress. Each of these villages was a small self-contained society which managed its own affairs through a representative committee (*panchayat*), over which presided a village-officer or head-man, who was selected with the king's approval and represented the community in its dealings with the superior officers of State. He also performed the duties of a village magistrate. The larger territorial divisions consisted of groups of these villages under the control of superior officers, among whose other duties was that of collecting the king's share of the produce. All these officials down to the head-man were servants of the State, and were remunerated either directly out of the king's share of the produce or by grants of land which they held either revenue-free or at a favourable rate.

By the time of the first Muslim invasion of Bengal the larger fiscal divisions had come to be known as *parganas*, each in charge of a *chaudhri* or principal revenue-officer. And here we have to notice a peculiar feature of Hindu society in which all offices were regarded by custom as hereditary. Just as the office of the Raja descended in his family, ordinarily by the rule of primogeniture, so did all the minor government offices, which were looked upon as a sort of family property.

The Muslims introduced no new system of revenue law into India. They found ready to hand a system closely analogous to their own, which they took over and worked through the Hindu agency existing at the time. But they proceeded gradually, by alteration of the methods of assessment and collection of the revenue, to evolve a more elaborate and scientific scheme of revenue administration. The old custom of paying the land revenue by division of the crop gave way in time to the system of cash-payments, under which the revenue ceased to be a levy upon actual produce and became a tax upon the productive powers of the soil, arrived at by measurement of the cultivable area and by estimate of the probable yield. By striking an average of agricultural prices spread over a period of years a cash rate for each unit of area was ascertained. The revenue demand was then stated in terms of money and the sum due annually from the peasant was determined by the area of his holding. This was the system first regularly established by Akbar. For a time the cultivator, whose interests Akbar desired to protect, was allowed the option of payment in kind, but cash-payments soon came to be the normal practice as being the more convenient method. While this change in the mode of payment was in keeping with the law of finance under which, as has been mentioned, the *kharaj* might be collected



in cash or in kind, it does not appear that Akbar imposed the land-tax under this name. Another modification made by Akbar was in the amount of the tax: he demanded a one-third share of the average gross produce instead of the one-sixth share sanctioned by Hindu custom.

A third alteration took place later in the method of assessment. The law of *Manu* contemplates dealing with the individual peasant, from whom the king's share was collected by weighment and division after every harvest, a primitive and simple system which must have tended to prove cumbersome and impracticable with the gradual extension of cultivation. For this there came to be substituted a method of lump assessment by which the levy was made upon the village as a whole, it being left to the village head-man to distribute the total burden among the peasants. This method was probably in vogue in pre-Muslim times and was certainly well established before the reign of Akbar, who seems to have disapproved of it as being oppressive to the ryot and to have reverted for that reason to the old practice of individual assessment. This practice, however, did not continue for long, and within a short period after his death the system of block assessment was restored and became firmly established; the village became again the unit of assessment and the head-man was made liable for payment of the whole.

Finally, in the closing years of the seventeenth century there came another change in the technique of collection. Internal disorder and consequent financial stress drove the government of the day to seek more convenient means of realizing its income, and resort was had to the practice of farming. The practice of making the official levy on each village was abandoned. The province was divided into large tracts, which subsequently acquired the name of estates; and the privilege of collecting in each of these areas was made over by contract to a person who agreed for a period of years to pay annually a predetermined sum which represented in a rough way the amount of the revenue which each estate might be expected to yield in accordance with the standard rates fixed in the time of Akbar.

The farmer under the terms of his contract was granted extensive administrative powers over the villages comprised in his estate, and it was he, and not an official of the government, who now settled with the head-man the revenue claim for each village. In short, the previous elaborate revenue machinery was discarded, and in return for a fixed annual payment practically all of the functions of government were handed over to a contractor, whose position of authority made him to all intents and purposes a landlord. What the ryot had now to pay was determined by the will of

sometimes been said of this legislation that it was based upon a mistake whereby mere tax-collectors were converted into landed proprietors invested with absolute and exclusive rights of ownership in the soil, but this view is clearly erroneous and was firmly repudiated by the Judges of the Calcutta High Court in their judgement in the *Great Rent Case* in 1865, in which it was laid down that the notion of an absolute estate in land in India was as alien to the Regulation law as it was to the old Hindu and Muslim law of the country. On the contrary, it was said, the Regulation law was designed to provide for and to protect the rights of subordinate holders, including the cultivators, which existed independently of the proprietary right vested in the zamindar. Section 8 of Bengal Regulation I of 1793 expressly reserved to the government full powers to legislate for the protection of these subordinate rights. Since then these powers have been freely exercised in legislation enacted in the interests of the lower grades of tenure-holders.

This intermediate or zamindari right in land was subsequently recognized in territories outside Bengal which, at a later stage, passed under British rule. In what may be roughly described as Upper India the right was found to exist not in individuals as in Bengal, but in landlord bodies which in various ways had established themselves in the villages in a position of superiority over the cultivators. Frequently these bodies were offshoots of high-caste ruling families, Brahmans or Rajputs, who did not practise cultivation, the descendants of junior members of the family of the Raja or chief to whom grants of the Raja's rights had been made by way of maintenance, and such grants had developed under the Hindu law into joint family property. In other parts, notably in the Punjab, these landlord bodies had their origin in the conquest and occupation of territory by cultivating tribes who had taken possession as ready-made peasant proprietors. In these areas, in which the zamindari right was formally conferred upon these village bodies, the government's claim to land revenue was not fixed in perpetuity as in Bengal, but was settled for a period of, generally, thirty years. This is the practice known as Temporary Settlement, and while the holders of the zamindari right enjoy a status similar to that of the zamindar in Bengal, they are more in the position of persons holding under long-term leases with a right to renewal at a revaluation on the expiry of the term.

In Bombay and in the greater portion of Madras the law of land-tenures was settled in a different way. For one reason or another the conditions in these parts of India had been unfavourable to the growth of any interest intermediate between that of the State and of the cultivator. No bodies of village-landlords of superior caste



had come into existence as in the provinces of Upper India, or if they had, they had disappeared during the long periods of disorder which followed on the disruption of the ancient kingdoms of the south, during which the country was at the mercy of bands of plunderers, such as the Marathas, who bled the cultivator white and saw to it that their collecting agents were not allowed to intercept for their own benefit any of the rents extracted from the peasant.

The Rajputs, who represent the Kshatriya or warrior caste of Manu, and to which class the majority of the landlord bodies in Upper India belong, do not seem to have ever settled in these regions. The result was that, when the law of tenure fell to be settled in these areas, there was no class of middlemen whose interests called for consideration, and the British government was able to deal direct with the ryots who inhabited villages of the type referred to in Manu, in which the community consisted of individual cultivators, each holding independently, not bound by family ties or by any tradition of descent from a common ancestor, but living together and organized under the control of a village head-man.

This system of settlement is what is known as the ryotwari system. All the arable land is surveyed and divided into fields or blocks each valued at a certain cash rate per acre. The amount which each ryot has to pay the government depends upon the area of his holding of which he is the registered occupant. So long as he pays the assessment he is entitled to retain his possession; he is not liable to eviction by the government except for default in payment, and he is at liberty in any year to abandon his holding or a portion of it at pleasure. His interest in his holding is heritable and transferable without restriction and he is entitled to the full benefit of any improvements which he makes; these do not involve any liability to an enhanced assessment. In short, where the ryotwari system of settlement obtains, the cultivator is a peasant proprietor (though not so styled) subject only to the payment to government of a tax which may be revised periodically.

To sum up, the British government has everywhere abandoned the attitude of its predecessors in rule who claimed to be the absolute owners of the soil. In some parts of India it has formally recognized and declared an intermediate proprietary right, not absolute or exclusive, but limited by concurrent and independent, though inferior, rights, which themselves had their origin in ancient custom or usage and which have now been defined and secured by legislation. Elsewhere, where intermediate rights had failed to spring up, the cultivator, subject to the State's claim to revenue, has become the virtual owner of the soil.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSONAL LAW

The personal law of the Hindus and Muslims has been little interfered with by British legislation. The courts in India are bound by statute to apply the rules of the personal law in all cases concerning succession, marriage, inheritance, and religious institutions; where no such rule is discoverable they must decide according to justice, equity, and good conscience, which means, in effect, according to principles of English law so far as they can reasonably be applied to the conditions peculiar to Indian society. Whatever development has taken place within the sphere of the personal law has been accomplished through the medium of judicial interpretation.

In the case of the Hindu law this process has had to be applied to an amorphous mass of rules imbedded in ancient texts and commentaries and couched in the vaguest language. And a further difficulty, which has created much embarrassment for the courts in their quest of a rule suitable for the particular case, arises out of the fact that the commentaries upon which they have to rely abound in contradictions. In the course of time it has come to be realized that what is contained in these ancient Hindu records is a mixture of rules of secular law, morality, and religious ritual.

The reason of this confusion is to be sought in the history of the evolution of the Hindu law, which, in its origin, was pure customary law made up of a volume of local usages which varied from place to place; it is impossible to suppose that there ever was at any time a body of uniform custom prevailing throughout the entire country. The knowledge of these customs was preserved by oral tradition down to the time when the art of writing was discovered and it became possible to reduce them to a written form. By this time the Aryan invasion of India had taken place and Brahmanism, with its system of caste, had come into existence. The Brahmins, the priestly order and, as such, superior to the other orders, were the only literate class and became the custodians and sole interpreters of the written law. The result was that in those parts of India which fell under the influence of the Brahmanical religion the law came to assume a new form, in which it was presented to the lower orders as a divine creation; the law was the expression of the will of the Deity, contained in a series of revelations made to the sages of antiquity.

The first written records of the law are the *Smritis*, which, in Hindu opinion, are the primary sources of the Hindu law as we have it to-day. There are three of these *Smritis*, those of Manu, Yajnavalkya, and Narada, which are supposed to have made their appearance in this order, though the dates of their appearance can



only be conjectured. It is thought that the *Narada Smriti*, which is an abridgement of the *Manu Smriti*, was published between 500 and 600 A.D. In each of these compilations the law is represented as being of divine origin; each *Smriti*, according to Hindu belief, is an infallible record of sacred law in spite of manifest conflict; and all are treated as being of equal authority. The *Smritis* became the subject of voluminous commentaries, the works of theologian-jurists who wrote at different periods and in different parts of India. Their interpretations of the *Smritis* varied to a considerable extent and have given rise to the various schools of Hindu law. One or other of the commentators acquired a pre-eminent reputation for learning in his own part of the country, and his interpretation of the law came to be accepted and followed as the settled law of the particular region. It has now become a principle of judicial decision that the *Smritis*, as so interpreted, are to be followed by the courts, though subject to the reservation that where there is a conflict between a custom and a text of the *Smritis*, the custom, if established, will override the text. It has been laid down by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council that clear proof of usage will outweigh the written text of the law.

Here it should be mentioned that up to the year 1864 the judges in India had no opportunity of subjecting the Hindu law to the influence of English methods of interpretation, for up to that date the rule of law to be applied to the particular case was enunciated by the Pandit, i.e. the Hindu law-officer attached to his court. The judge was merely the Pandit's mouthpiece and accepted without question the opinion which was given him, an opinion for which authority could easily be found among the numerous and conflicting texts upon which the Pandit could draw. Unsatisfactory as this arrangement was, no better one was available during the period which had to elapse before knowledge of the Hindu legal system could be brought within the reach of those who had to administer it. So long as the services of the law-officers were retained it was impossible for the Hindu law to receive the impress of English legal doctrine. The law contained in the ancient texts was rigorously applied as though it was the law of the nineteenth century, by which time much of it, as real customary law, must have become obsolete and out of harmony with the conditions of the day.

From 1864 onwards new influences were brought to bear which have served to transform the ancient law to a considerable extent. It is not that the courts in India have consciously attempted to introduce alteration, but the adoption of English methods of judicial trial and legal interpretation has naturally had the effect of imparting clarity and precision to a system obscured by its vagueness and fluidity.

So far as our knowledge goes, the law of the Hindus had never previously been submitted to the process of judicial development. While we find in some of the ancient writings references to judicial institutions and forms of judicial procedure, we have no records of the proceedings of Hindu courts of law. During the six or seven centuries of Muslim domination, the only courts which functioned were Muslim courts which could administer only Muslim law and were thus closed to Hindu suitors, who were left to settle their differences as best they could—usually by a process of arbitration carried out by bodies whose efforts were directed to the production of a compromise between the litigants rather than to the settlement of any principles of law. Whatever development in the law had taken place before the establishment of the British courts had been the exclusive work of the commentators, whose canons of interpretation were widely different from those of the English lawyer. To the Hindu jurist his law is divine law to be explained by the principle of authority; to the western jurist law is a human institution to be expounded by the light of reason.

In dealing with the ancient records of the Hindu law the courts in India have been guided by the pronouncements of their highest court of appeal, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, which has consistently inculcated the need of caution in the interpretation of books of mixed religion, morality, and law, so as to avoid the mistake of treating as strict law mere precepts addressed to the moral sense and thereby imparting to the Hindu law an inflexible rigidity never contemplated by the original law-givers. But it remains none the less true that the rules which may properly be described as law in the strict sense have acquired a measure of rigidity, a result which was inevitable if the law was to become certain. It has often been remarked that the two main characteristics of English judicial procedure are the importance attached to the facts of the case and respect for precedent. The law is applied only after the facts have been carefully ascertained, and the rule once declared with respect to those facts becomes the rule to be applied thereafter where the facts are identical or analogous. Every judicial decision becomes a precedent and the accumulation of precedents leads to the hardening and stabilization of the law. In addition to this, the binding force of the personal law has been enormously enhanced through its administration by courts in British India which are invested with the amplest authority to enforce their decrees by execution and which do rigorously enforce them.

In short, what English methods of legal thought and practice have done for the Hindu law has been to clarify it and to render it definite and certain. There can be very little of the Hindu per-



sonal law which has not been passed under judicial review, and the process of development in this way may now be said to have reached its limits.

While the personal law of the Muslims has been similarly subjected to the process of judicial scrutiny, it has not been affected to the same extent. Muslim law, as compared with that of the Hindus, is a modern product; it was created and developed between the seventh and tenth centuries A.D. It is based upon a number of texts in the Koran and a mass of Traditions of the Prophet and owes its development to several generations of jurists, under whose hands it attained a professedly final form in the tenth or eleventh century A.D. Like the Hindu law it bears the marks of its evolution; it is academic rather than practical law, created to a large extent by speculative jurists and theologians who were not in any close contact with the practical needs of judicial administration. All the same, it attained a higher pitch of development than the Hindu law and is characterized by a precision of statement which the latter does not possess. Being better defined it has, accordingly, suffered less change in the course of its application by the courts in India.

On the other hand, it has the defect of excessive rigidity, and is essentially a medieval code which it is difficult to adjust to modern conditions. According to orthodox theory the Islamic law is a divine institution, revealed under divine inspiration and consequently not to be added to or altered by human agency. Legislation is not within the power of an earthly sovereign. All attempts to expand the law as originally revealed by resort to human reason have been regarded with disfavour as being acts of impiety, though some of the 'schools'—and in particular the Hanafi school which prevails in India—have allowed themselves much more liberty in this respect than others. But all development through the aid of analogical reasoning (*qiyas*) came to an end when, in or about the eleventh century, it was declared that the doors of investigation and interpretation were henceforth to remain closed: the law had crystallized into its final form. There are, it is true, enlightened Muslim jurists of the present day who deny that there is any solid foundation for the doctrine that the Islamic law is incapable of further expansion and adjustment, but they form a small minority and so far have made no headway against the dead weight of orthodox opposition.

In dealing with a body of law for which this immutable character is claimed, the judges of the English courts, who examine it in the light of modern theories and principles, are under the temptation to depart from a literal application of rules which appear to them too narrow for a changed social order. On the other hand, they are

obliged to pay the utmost respect to the religious susceptibilities of Muslim litigants, and the tendency is consequently to steer a middle course. In a general way the principle followed is for the courts to deny themselves a discretion of interpretation in respect of those departments of the law which concern the purely domestic relations, such, for example, as the laws regulating marriage and succession which operate only on those of the Muslim persuasion.

A freer hand is claimed in dealing with those portions of the reserved law which relate to certain disposals of property, such as the law of Gifts, Wills and *Waqfs* (so far as these have not been affected by general enactments), and the reason for this is apparent; for rules which were devised to cover dealings with property by Muslims *inter se* cannot, in reason, be literally applied to similar transactions between them and the followers of different religions who are their fellow subjects. There is, moreover, the consideration that numerous new forms of property have come into existence since the days when the Muslim law was finally formulated, to which that law could not be applied at all.

But even this liberty must be exercised with caution. A few years ago a decision of the Privy Council on the law of *Waqf* (gifts for charitable and religious purposes) caused considerable commotion among the Muslim community. Their Lordships held that a disposition of property in favour of the settler's descendants, with an ultimate gift over to charity on failure of the line, was a colourable transaction which was intended merely to defeat the rules of inheritance, and so was not authorized by the Muslim law. The Muslim view, based presumably on the principle that charity begins at home, is that the support of the founder's family is in itself a pious purpose, and the result was that their Lordships' decision had to be nullified by legislation.

To sum up, the British courts in India have, on the whole, maintained in their integrity those portions of personal law which it has been our policy to reserve to the two main classes of the population of India. In the earlier stages the rules which fall under this head were enforced more literally than they should have been; in the later stages they have received a wider interpretation so as to adapt them to a changed society. Judicial influence has produced clarification and precise definition; the rule which was formerly vague has been rendered certain, and certainty has been achieved with a minimum disturbance of religious sentiment. Some critics have asserted that respect for religious feeling has been carried too far and that the British government might well have been less timid in the way of legislative interference. It has been said, for instance, that Hindus are not so firmly wedded to their ancient usages as to be likely to resent their modification and adaptation



to the social requirements of modern times. There is something to be said for this point of view, for, as a religion, Hinduism eludes definition; it is not, as Sir Alfred Lyall has remarked, a single creed but a complex of various religious beliefs. The Hindu religious system is just as fluid and vague as the Hindu legal system and offers, in this respect, a striking contrast to the faith of Islam, of which the tenets are at once simple, precise, and easily intelligible. The Brahman articles of faith have never obtained universal acceptance among Hindus, nor has the Hindu code, which is saturated with Brahmanism, provided rules of law which apply all round. But from the beginning of British dominion in India religious neutrality has remained one of the cardinal principles of our administration, and this policy of toleration forbids interference with what are considered to be the religious institutions of either belief. The further reform of this branch of the law can best be left to those whom it most closely concerns and whose efforts in this direction will now find ample opportunity under the new constitution which has conferred upon the people of India the right to manage their own affairs.

#### REFORM OF THE LAW

While the legislature and the courts have thus combined to bring about the changes just described, other forces have been at work to disturb the conservatism of the peoples of the East and to excite discontent against the restraints imposed upon them by their antiquated systems of law. The people of India have been gradually drawn into a close association with those of other countries whose methods of thought and habits of life are very different from their own and have thus been exposed to the impact of new social and political ideas. India has long since ceased to live a life of isolation and has been brought into the stream of movements which are tending everywhere to dislocate ancient legal institutions which are out of relation to the social and economic needs of the day. Since the middle of the nineteenth century the advance of science has been providing in an ever-increasing degree fresh means of control over the forces of nature which, through their application to the processes of industry, have served to swell the volume of material wealth and to reorganize human society on a new economic basis.

The law, if it is to discharge its functions of securing the maximum of protection for the rights of members of the society which lives under it, must take notice of new complexities introduced into human relations and readjust itself to the conditions of the times. And so in India the absorption of western ideas and the development of new industries offering ampler opportunity for individual

effort and the accumulation of wealth have aroused among the Hindus in particular a spirit of individualism which is alien to their own traditions but characteristic of the civilization of the West. The extent to which India has been affected by these external movements is reflected in the contents of her statute book, in which are now incorporated legislative measures dealing with such matters as joint-stock companies, labour in factories, the settlement of trade disputes, motor and air transport; she is no longer a purely agricultural country. Nor is it British India alone which has fallen under these influences; they have been at work in that other part of India, the India of the native States, which, though it stands politically apart, is being welded into economic unity with the rest of the country.

The growing sense of individual right is leading to the disintegration of the joint-family system, which for centuries has been a corner-stone of the Hindu social edifice, and is tending to create a breach in the institution of caste, which enlightened opinion is coming to regard as a serious obstacle to social and material progress. The decay of the joint-family system dates, indeed, from a time prior to the advent of British rule, for the establishment of the Daya Bhaga school of Hindu law in Bengal had already introduced a new conception of the legal structure of the Hindu family and had declared the principle of separate, that is individual, property as opposed to the old principle of corporate ownership. But under the stimulus of the new influences which have been brought to bear individualism has acquired a new impetus, and there is now evidence of a desire for emancipation from the trammels of the law of joint-family property. The successful trader or the clever lawyer whose talents and industry have brought him riches no longer feels disposed to share them with the less fortunate or less enterprising members of his family.

And so there has been during recent years a manifestation of a desire among the Hindus for amendment of their personal law. Legislation has been initiated and carried through for the purpose of extending individual rights of property, as also for the amendment of the Hindu law of inheritance with its marked preference for agnate over cognate relationship in the rules which govern intestate succession; provision has been made for the admission as heirs of close cognate relations in preference to agnates who are more remote. Steps, too, have been taken to raise the status of the Hindu woman by removal of some of the restrictions which limit the extent of the interest which she can take in property by inheritance. There is evidence also of a movement towards reform of the law of marriage by the abolition of the ban against marriages between persons of different castes.



Here it is to be noticed that the reservation of the personal law has led to a conflict of laws which could hardly have been foreseen in the early years of British rule. Increased facilities for travel and the desire for a knowledge of western culture through western education has led to the temporary migration of Indians of all classes to England and other countries, during which there have not infrequently taken place marriages with European women. Where such marriages are contracted in England in accordance with the forms of English law, they are held to be binding by the English courts, which ignore all unions entered into under other systems, such as those of the Hindus and Muslims which sanction polygamy. In India, where the personal law must be applied, the union of a Hindu male with a woman outside his own caste is generally condemned as invalid, though in some parts a marriage between a man of a higher and a woman of inferior caste is still treated as valid, as it undoubtedly was under the early Hindu law. There have consequently been some cases where a marriage celebrated in India between a Hindu and a European woman who has professed Hinduism has been validated under this exception, though this involves a departure from orthodox doctrine, which takes the view that a person must be born a Hindu and cannot become one by conversion. The Muslim law, while it does not treat the marriage of a Musalman with a woman of the Christian faith as absolutely void, nevertheless allows him not only lawfully to take other wives, but also to determine an existing valid union by a mere pronouncement of divorce, a practice totally repugnant to the English conception of the status of marriage.

And so the courts in England have consistently held that no British subject with an Indian domicile can repudiate a marriage celebrated in England in accordance with English forms of law by raising a plea of incapacity imposed upon him by the law of his religion, or take advantage of any power of divorce conferred by his personal law in order to put an end to a marriage contracted in England. While this unfortunate conflict of laws has led to distressing consequences, it is difficult to see how it is to be removed. The matter has now been referred in England to a committee appointed by the Lord Chancellor, but some reciprocal action in India would seem to be called for if the present situation is to be remedied. Up to the present the attempts to reform the Hindu law of marriage have failed to produce anything calculated to assist in the solution of this awkward problem.

An interesting instance of spontaneous departure from the ancient Hindu law is to be found in the history of the growth of the testamentary power among Hindus. It is certain that the will was an institution absolutely unknown to the old law. It was

thought at one time that it was introduced into India by the English lawyers, but subsequent researches have proved that wills were being made in Bengal long before the days of the British occupation. It was in Bengal that the conception of individual property first took root, and it had become firmly established there by the sixteenth century. Thereafter the practice of making wills became common as the result, most probably, of association with Muslims, to whom the will had always been known.

While the British courts exercising jurisdiction in the Presidency towns recognized the existence of the testamentary power, the other courts in India declared against it, and in Madras opposition was carried to the pitch of prohibiting testamentary dispositions by statute. But wills continued to be made by Hindus in spite of this discouragement, and in the end opposition had to give way before established usage. The making of wills came to be regulated by statute; the testamentary power was extended from time to time by legislation until at the present day the law of wills for Hindus has been assimilated to, and is, in substance, identical with, the law of wills in England.

In bringing to a close this review of the changes in the native laws of India which have taken place under British rule, it is interesting to observe the course of events in other oriental countries in which, as well as in India, ancient codes are giving way in favour of modern systems. The Hindu law is of course peculiar to India, but the Muslim law has for a long time prevailed in other countries which have been free from foreign domination; and in some of these there have been developments akin to those witnessed in British India. As has already been mentioned, when the problem of framing a body of territorial law for India came under consideration, it was decided to discard both the Hindu and Muslim systems, with the exception only of those portions of them which were intimately connected with the religion and the social structure of the people of India. It was held that in other respects the native laws, reflecting as they did the primitive conditions of society in which they had their origin, were totally unsuited for incorporation in a body of law which was to be applied to the circumstances of the nineteenth century. And there was the further consideration that the law of both systems was purely personal law to be applied only to those who professed one or other of the two main religions. The result was the introduction of a body of law drawn mainly from English sources. In taking this step the British in India were merely anticipating the action which has since been taken in other oriental countries in which the Islamic code has been largely superseded and has been replaced by new systems both of substantive and procedural law based upon the model of one or other



of the codes of continental Europe. In these countries, too, it has come to be realized that a body of law which was supposed to have reached the limits of perfection by the eleventh century, and was declared to be unalterable by human agency, has long outlived its usefulness. The Muslim doctrine that legislation is not within the competence of an earthly sovereign was never, indeed, anything more than a pious fiction, which was consistently ignored by strong-minded rulers, who arrogated and freely exercised the right of framing the laws which best suited their purpose.

A strong desire for modernization of their legal systems began to manifest itself in Islamic countries about the middle of the nineteenth century, particularly in those whose geographical situation placed them in close contact with the civilizations of the West. It was Turkey which gave the lead to the rest of the Muslim world in the pursuit of law reform; there reform culminated in the revolution of 1924 when the Caliphate was abolished and the old law of Islam was completely suppressed. Other Muslim countries in the Near East, though not prepared to go the whole way with Turkey, are nevertheless seriously bent upon the rejuvenation of their legal systems. Persia, Iraq, Egypt, and Syria have travelled a long way towards reform and have adopted new codes of substantive law which are a close imitation of those of modern Europe; they have also established new systems of judicature and rules of judicial procedure drawn from the same sources.

This recent progress has been stimulated by the forces of nationalism which have acquired a new vigour since the end of the Great War. Nationalism is utterly alien to Muslim tradition, which regards Islam as an international, not a national, institution, but it appears to have made a strong appeal to the imagination of backward Muslim communities, who see in it an instrument by which they may hope to raise themselves to a higher plane of political and economic life. The newly developed sense of national pride provides an urge towards the assimilation of their institutions to those of the western nations with whom they aspire to associate on a footing of independence and equality.

And so in India. Here, too, the spirit of nationalism has been quickened, and with the legislative freedom which her peoples now enjoy we may anticipate still further departure from the ways of the ancient law. Such development is, in truth, inevitable for, as has been aptly remarked by the eminent oriental scholar, Professor Snouck Hurgronje, 'the irresistible power of the evolution of human society is merciless to laws even of divine origin and transfers them, when their time is come, from the treasury of everlasting goods to a museum of antiquities'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Mohammedanism* (New York, 1916), p. 150.

## CHAPTER IV EDUCATION

### THE FOUNDATIONS

INDIA claims, and has the right to glory in, an ancient and long enduring culture, an age of centuries in which art and science, literature and philosophy flourished and the influence of Indian thought and Indian scholarship spread far beyond the bounds of the Indian world. When Trevelyan, writing in 1838, on the threshold of the new dispensation, regarded the coming of western learning to the East, he saw it not as an invasion but as a home-coming:

"The time has arrived when the ancient debt of civilisation which Europe owes to Asia is about to be repaid; and the sciences, cradled in the East and brought to maturity in the West, are now by a final effort to overspread the world."

The inspiration of the great age of Indian life had then long passed away. Sanskrit, fixed and canonized, the language of the Hindu law, religion, and culture, had been mortified to the uses of a hereditary priesthood and, thus withdrawn from the common life, had tended to a literature of elaboration rather than development. Religion seemed to have sunk back into itself and closed the door to all new influences save such as could take on the darker or more neutral colours of their environment. Innovators and reformers had preached and persuaded and passed, armies had marched and countermarched, the political scene had shivered and changed, time and again, in the tides of invasion and conquest; but the old culture had remained in the land and continued, indolent or slumbering, to exercise its mastery over Indian life.

Throughout the centuries the Brahmans, who were the repositories of learning and the directors of the Hindu life, continued to brood upon and to elaborate the sacred texts and to transmit their study in religious institutions—*tols* and *vidyalayas* and *chatuspathis*—to the succeeding generations. Sanskrit was the only wear, the beginning and end of all their study, the one language of the oracles through the length and breadth of the Hindu land. The Babel of the laity, from whom the knowledge of the old tongue was withheld, may have been permitted, encouraged even, in secular schools to do obeisance to the digits and the alphabet and to learn such rudiments in their own vernaculars as were appropriate to their condition. There had been indeed some development of

<sup>1</sup> C. E. Trevelyan, *The Education of the People of India* (1838), p. 168.



poetical literature in a number of the vulgar tongues. But this was not a concern of the priesthood.

Among the Muslims a more democratic system prevailed. The connexion of learning and religion was maintained, and still an alien language, the Arabic of the Holy Book, was the medium of higher study. But there were also schools which combined religious and secular learning, in which pupils, in addition to memorizing portions of the Koran and being instructed in their religious duties, might learn something of their vernacular and of Persian, the language of Islamic culture and of the administration.

The systems had much in common. They taught in a language or languages foreign to the people at large, they drew their strength from their association with religion, and, being based on unchanging authority, they discouraged the spirit of free inquiry and resisted change. But there was one respect in which they differed profoundly. While the Hindu schools were designed for one favoured class of the community and excluded secular instruction, Muslim schools admitted secular instruction and were open without let to all who confessed that there was but one God and Muhammad was his Prophet.

Public instruction, so far as it went, was not the business of the State. Many of the institutions of higher learning owed their maintenance to the piety of rulers or other men of wealth and position. But the main support of schools and scholars was the free-will offerings of the people. Education was unconstrained. No one was taxed for schools. No one need trouble himself with learning. But those who desired to study need have no anxiety about ways and means if there was a suitable school at hand or which could be reached by pilgrimage. It was common in the Sanskrit schools for the pandit, himself supported by the *dakshinas*, or customary gifts, of the community, to house and feed without charge the pupils who sat at his feet. They, in turn, on holidays and feast days collected for their master. In the *madrasas*, or Arabic schools of higher learning, the poor student coming from a distance could ordinarily obtain the plain necessities of life from a pious family in the neighbourhood, either in simple charity or as a reward for teaching the children of his host to say their prayers and recite some verses of the Koran.

It was not to be expected that the schools should not have suffered, like every other interest of peace, during the long welter of war in which the Mughal empire fell to ruin. In the disorder which prevailed over the greater part of the country, no property was safe which could be easily appropriated. Pious endowments were diverted to private use. Many institutions which had prospered with their help must have passed out of existence without successors

to take their place. But however unhappy the conditions, life still went on and pandits and maulvis, like other workers, must have continued, if in diminished numbers, to ply their trades. A review at the time when the East India Company began to emerge as a ruling power must still have disclosed a scattered scene of discouraged *tols* and *madrasas* surviving from better ordered times and of petty village schools—*maktabs* and *patsalas*. Proceeding from all of them, religious or secular, classical or vernacular, would be a sound of chanting, of pupils reciting (as pupils still recite) what they had learnt by rote, their letters, their arithmetic, their Sanskrit grammar and vocabulary, their Koran.

#### THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS

As order returned with the increasing power of the Company, the rulers admitted to their mind more freely, as a principle pointing to action on their part, a sense of their moral obligation to the ruled. The first duty of the new government was to consolidate its position, the next, to establish peace in the land and good government. All this being set on the way to achievement, the altruism which was their Christian inheritance, and which their country would not allow them to forget, might express itself in the attempt to improve the morals of their subjects without attacking their religion. The principles of a Christian government, its practices (now that it was out of danger), the conduct of its officers (as soon as it had set its house in order) must conduce to a change of heart and outlook; and something might be done by a revival of the cultures which had made India great.

The arrival in Calcutta, in 1780, of one Majid-ud-Din, a maulvi renowned for piety and scholarship, and the solicitation on his and their behalf of a number of leading Muslims, gave Warren Hastings the opportunity of showing the new government in the guise of a patron of learning. The establishment of the maulvi in suitable quarters, with forty stipendiary students and a sweeper on Rs. 3 a month, begins the history of educational action in India as a concern of the British government. It may be worth noting at this stage that the Madrasa thus founded was essentially an institution of religious learning and that the policy of toleration or neutrality was not then and has not since been interpreted as debarring government from assisting, or even from maintaining, schools founded to provide for the educational needs of a particular religious community and teaching the tenets of that religion as a necessary part of their instruction.

There is another explanation which may be interjected here. As the narrative proceeds it will be seen that the interest tends to centre on Bengal. The reason is that the old Presidency of Fort



William in Bengal was the greatest of the Indian provinces, that the Governor of Bengal was to be the Governor-General of India, that Calcutta was the capital of the country, and that, of all Indian peoples, the people of Bengal were the most eager for educational progress.

What Warren Hastings had done for the Muslims, his successor was prepared to do for the Hindus. Accordingly, we find Lord Cornwallis in 1792 supporting the establishment at the cost of government of a Sanskrit College in the sacred city of Benares

'for the preservation and cultivation of the laws, literature and religion of that nation (the Hindu) at this centre of their faith and common resort of all their tribes'.<sup>1</sup>

We hear little more of education for the next twenty years. Had the Madrasa and the Sanskrit College been successful we should no doubt, with the gradual wakening of the sense of public duty, have had more of them, and still more, and education in India might have taken a different course. But they were not. In fact, they were not wanted and, being unwanted, they were inefficient. The Benares College, so far from improving on indigenous institutions of the same kind run at a small fraction of the cost, had become by 1804 an object of public ridicule. The Madrasa was not much better. Its record shows in 1788 'grave misconduct', in 1791 'disorder', in 1811 and 1815 'inefficiency'. By 1822 it had mustered a library of twelve volumes all told.

To proceed on such lines was obviously to court disappointment. But what could be done? The alternative of English had not yet, as a practicable proposition, come into view. Persian was still the language of administration and of the law courts. Government, faced by a complex of apparently insuperable obstacles, lay low and did nothing—possibly less, for they discouraged the work of Christian missionaries, whose zeal, they feared, would import more trouble than advantage.

There is on record a confusing minute written by Lord Minto in 1811 in which he reports that learning is in a very bad way indeed. Unless a fostering hand is interposed, 'the revival of letters may shortly become hopeless from a want of books or of people capable of explaining them'. He excepts from his generalism the learning connected with the peculiar religious doctrines of the people and at the same time attributes the general prevalence of perjury and forgery to the lack of religious instruction. He is not, however, very practical. Such proposals as he presents for the consideration of the Directors are merely for an unconvincing

<sup>1</sup> Loc. cit., *Selections from Educational Records*, Bureau of Education, India (1920), Part I, p. 10.

reform of the existing colleges and the establishment of more of the same. No action appears to have been taken on them. But in 1813, under the influence of Charles Grant and of Wilberforce, Parliament, which was not daunted by difficulties at so great a distance, included in the regrant of the Company's charter a clause designed to force on them the initiation of a regular educational policy:

It shall be lawful for the Governor-General in Council to direct that . . . a sum of not less than one lakh of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India.

'It shall be lawful'—it was not yet obligatory. The philanthropic party who secured this first declaration of the interest of Parliament in the education of India must yet have felt that they had started a movement of the first consequence. But developments were slow in coming.

It was not till the following year (1814) was well advanced that the Directors' instructions in regard to the new clause in the charter reached India or until the year after that that the Governor-General, the Earl of Moira, was in a position to advise on the important issues which it raised.

By this time a period of fifty years had elapsed since Clive had obtained from the Mughal Emperor the firman which made the Company virtual sovereigns of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. Since then they had added to their territories and consolidated their strength. Britain was now the first power in India. The extension of her authority had been accompanied by the establishment of law, and later Governors had been so far released from more dominating anxieties as to be free to concern themselves with the abolition of abuses and to contemplate the improvement of the morals and culture of the people. The instrument of education had not yet been taken up for use. If conditions had been established which were favourable to educational recovery, no signs were yet apparent of any eager spirit of advance, and it is probable that India was, educationally, at the end of the period pretty much as it had been at the beginning. The indigenous systems continued in a state of feeble animation, and one or two public institutions stood to assert the interest of the government and to reveal the undoubted fact that it had not been exercised to any very useful purpose.

In regarding this record, we must bear in mind that no progress could be effected by government without the consent of the governed, that both to Hindus and Muslims education (except for the teaching of the three R's) was a function of religion, and that



European interference was suspect as infidel and as being in its influence hostile to the maintenance of religious authority. To the people of India the Company was an oligarchy of upstarts or interlopers, tolerable only on account of their strength and the peace which they enforced, intolerable in any aspect which might reveal them as the agents of an alien and proselytizing faith.

#### MARKING TIME

Lord Moira's civil administration was to be distinguished by benevolence and devotion to the general welfare. But the best intentions and an enlightened outlook failed to advance him in the solution of the problem now forced on his attention. In due course he submitted his proposals. They are set forth at some length in the concluding seventeen paragraphs (out of 135) of a Minute on the Judicial Administration dated 2 October 1815.

Lord Moira takes new ground by concerning himself primarily with the village schools. The key of the situation lies in the education of the masses. They have schools at present, and these attend well enough to the teaching of the rudiments. But the inculcation of morals forms no part of their instruction. In the low ebb of principles and conduct which is everywhere apparent, this is the first essential. If the multiplication of village schools, which he does not meantime recommend, is a matter of calculation, their correction is a positive duty:

'The remedy is to furnish the village schoolmasters with little manuals of religious sentiments and ethic maxims conveyed in such a shape as may be attractive to the scholars, taking care that while awe and adoration of the Supreme Being are earnestly instilled, no jealousy be excited by pointing out any particular creed.'<sup>1</sup>

At this point he touches deprecatingly on a provision of the Act which was designed to facilitate the work of Christian missions. The direct methods of the missionaries, he considers, would alarm the Brahmans into contest and so defeat the purpose of propagating the inestimable lights of true religion. The course which he proposes will achieve the same happy end by leading the people gradually and unsuspectingly to reject error and accept the truth.

Until his little manuals have done their work, Lord Moira conceives, it would be useless to spend money on the encouragement of the indigenous colleges:

'I do not believe that in these retreats there remain any embers capable of being fanned into life.'

As to the 'middling' schools, it should be considered how far

<sup>1</sup> Loc. cit., *Selections from Educational Records*, Bureau of Education, India (1920), Part I, pp. 25-9.

government should interfere with them and how they might be improved. This and other questions in regard to education might be referred to a number of committees, not yet appointed. Meantime he has these definite proposals to make, that two experimental schools (nature unspecified), one for Hindus, one for Muslims, should be established at each district head-quarters, and that Houses of Industry should be set up for 'the education, reformation and employment of infant profligates'.

Lord Moira closes with a trumpet call:

'To be the source of blessings to the immense population of India is an ambition worthy of our country. In proportion as we have found intellect neglected and sterile here, the obligation is the stronger on us to cultivate it. The field is noble. May we till it worthily!'

The earnestness of the minute, its high moral tone, and its intermittent good sense cannot have concealed from the Directors that the proposals were vague and confused and could have no useful outcome. The flurry was over. They had done their best; and this was all that came of it. The allotment remained unspent throughout the period of Lord Moira's administration.

This does not mean that the curtain was rung down on education for a period of years, but merely that the lack of accord between the Court of Directors and the Governor-General prevented the working out of plans for the appropriation of the one lakh grant to a definite educational policy.

There was in fact a good deal of irregular activity. The government, for want of anything better to do, were pushing themselves with open eyes along the old blind road and preparing for the establishment of a Sanskrit College in Calcutta. Missionaries were making use of their new freedom, teaching, translating, experimenting. In 1818 a Baptist Mission College was opened at Serampore. A School Book Society (which did good work for nearly a century) and a School Society were founded in Calcutta, an Oriental College at Agra, and so on. Mr. Fraser, a member of the Board of Revenue at Delhi, opened and maintained at his own cost a number of schools to teach Persian to 'the children of the peasantry'. Wealthy Indians were turning again to the pious duty of commemorating honoured names by educational endowments.

Most important of all probably was the founding of the Vidyalaya, or Hindu College, at Calcutta, for which a sum of over a lakh of rupees was provided by local subscription. The purpose was to provide a liberal education which might lead to the purification of the Hindu life. English was to be the language of study. Now for the first time since Charles Grant proposed it in 1792 we have



English brought forward as the instrument of reform. This time the omens are favourable. The impulse is from within.

There was as yet but little activity in Madras, the most patient of the Presidencies; but in Bombay Mountstuart Elphinstone was doing what he could. He was the first of the Governors to encourage the teaching of English:

'If English could be at all diffused among persons who have the least time for reflection, the progress of knowledge, by means of it, would be accelerated in a tenfold ratio.'

There is at present, he reports, but little desire for English. But as a first step towards creating such a desire he advocates the establishment of a school at Bombay where English might be taught. His wishes were to be gratified by the people themselves who, on his retirement a few years later, started a fund ultimately amounting to over two lakhs of rupees as an endowment for three professorships of the English language and the European arts and sciences 'to be designated the Elphinstone professorships'.

#### APPOINTMENT OF GENERAL COMMITTEE

In 1823, the year of Lord Moira's departure, government awoke or was wakened to the need for action if it was not to be reproached for lingering behind the times, and appointed a standing committee so that the business of education might be taken up in better earnest. The new committee, to be known as the General Committee of Public Instruction, was put in charge of the existing government institutions and of the one lakh grant (with some arrears), and entrusted with the duty of ascertaining the state of public education and of advising from time to time on measures for the better instruction of the people, the introduction among them of useful knowledge, and the improvement of their moral character. We are never, it may be remarked in passing, to get away from this pre-occupation of government with the morals of its subjects and its desire and endeavour to associate the advance of learning with moral improvement.

Beginning their inquiries energetically enough, the Committee seems to have been quickly discouraged by the reports received and to have so impressed themselves with the difficulties and dangers in the way of doing anything remarkable that a further period of years had to pass before substantial progress was made. This, despite the growing impatience of the Directors, who could now represent themselves as straining at the leash:

'We wish you to be fully apprised of our zeal for the progress and

<sup>1</sup> Loc. cit., *Selections from Educational Records*, Bureau of Education, India (1929), Part I, p. 176.

improvement of education among the natives of India, and of our willingness to make considerable sacrifices to that important end if proper means for the attainment of it could be pointed out to us.<sup>1</sup>

But still the Committee drifted in the doldrums with all sail set, whistling for the wind to every quarter except that in which it was gathering. Of all the airts the wind could blow, the west alone was of no use to them. To put it in their own words:

'Tuition in European sciences (is) neither among the sensible wants of the people nor in the power of Government to bestow'.<sup>2</sup>

There was nothing for them to do but continue their drift, trying to put a polish on the education of pandits and maulvis and holding themselves in undiscourageable readiness for any opportunity which might offer of slipping a leaven of English into the congested courses.

It was in vain that Ram Mohan Ray protested against the establishment of the new Sanskrit College. Himself a Brahman, he denounced the traditional education of the Brahmans in terms which, if he had used them, would have meant another nail in the coffin of Macaulay. He urged government to carry on the task which the Vidyalaya had so well begun and to set up a few European professors in a college which might do some good to India. But Ram Mohan Ray was a reformer. The Committee heard little good of him, it is likely, from that orthodox opinion, vocal in their offices and on their verandas, which they were anxious to conciliate; and there were scandalous tales about the Vidyalaya and some of its Young Turks. So they paltered with the problem, as many of us who have worked in India with the advantage of a century's experience behind us have potttered with such problems in our time, because we could not deal with them—the education of women, for example, or the education of the depressed classes.

It is possible that nothing was lost by holding back. When the time was ripe events would take charge, requiring a new agency for their service. Meantime the Committee were keeping the flag flying, and the way was being prepared for the change that had to come. The students of the Vidyalaya were moving afield, carrying their outlook into the towns of Bengal. Within the Committee the fashion of Orientalism was losing ground as younger members came in with more forward views. Persian was about to be discarded as the language of administration and the courts, giving way to English and the vernaculars; and a Governor-General was coming to India who was capable of resolute action in the field of reform.

<sup>1</sup> Loc. cit., *Selections from Educational Records*, Bureau of Education, India (1920), Part I, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 95.



## THE NEW POLICY

It was the time of catholic emancipation, parliamentary reform, the suppression of slavery. The liberal spirit which triumphed in such measures was not to be found wanting in the consideration of Indian affairs preliminary to the regrant of the Company's charter, which was due in 1833. The Government of India Act of that year, conceived with a view to the development of the country primarily in the interest of its Indian inhabitants, brought India fairly into the line of progress. Lord William Bentinck, Governor-General of Bengal, was appointed the first Governor-General of united India. No better man could have been found to inaugurate the new deal. He was near the close of his term of office, but had shown the spirit which was in him by courageous measures of reform.

Early in his term of office he had made clear what his decision on the educational issue would be when it came to be referred to him. The following quotation is taken from a letter addressed to the Committee of Public Instruction on 26 June 1829:

'Impressed with a deep conviction of the importance of the subject, and cordially disposed to promote the great object of improving India by spreading abroad the lights of European knowledge, morals and civilisation, his Lordship in Council has no hesitation in stating to your Committee and in authorising you to announce to all concerned in the superintendence of your native seminaries that it is the wish and admitted policy of the British Government to render its own language gradually and eventually the language of public business throughout the country, and that it will omit no opportunity of giving every reasonable and practical degree of encouragement to the execution of this project.'<sup>1</sup>

The General Committee at this time was evenly divided against itself. Debates proceeded with dust and heat to no useful end. Neither side could prevail. There was no difference as to the object to be pursued, the spread of enlightenment in India, nor in the view that, for the present, effort should be concentrated on the upper and middle classes of society. The backwardness of the country, the enormous population to be dealt with, the multiplicity of languages, the lack of qualified teachers, the lack of books, the lack of funds, combined to render it impossible for government to attempt to educate the general body of the people. Meantime, there were popular systems in force which, poor as they were, did not fall so very far behind the systems in force in the less forward European countries. Development and improvement would

<sup>1</sup> Loc. cit., C. E. Trevelyan, *The Education of the People of India* (1838), p. 146.

attend on increasing prosperity; and the Missions would help. But no general progress could be expected until the education of the better classes had furnished the agency necessary for the work.

Both parties, then, had the same immediate purpose, to educate the natural leaders of the people; and they had the same long view, that the leaders would in process of time communicate their enlightenment to the masses. There must have been disagreement as to who were the leaders, although this does not emerge from the documents and may not have been realized. The actual difference on which they split was as to the plan of campaign.

Hitherto, as we have seen, action had proceeded in the faith that the proper course was to encourage the classical systems in force, the Sanskrit system for the Hindus and the Arabic system for the Muslims, both systems religious in their inspiration and content, and so to influence them that these two languages might be made the vehicle of a new learning incompatible with the religious teaching they conveyed. The metaphor of grafting was popular. The new growth of western learning was to be *grafted* on the eastern stocks in a union which might encourage both. The Orientalists—so the conservative party were called—hoped on a single stem to improve the briar and the rose. It was nothing that their record was a long tale of unsuccess, that in order to give their institutions some semblance of efficiency they had had to put them, one and all, under European control, or that their endeavours to influence the conservatism of pandits and maulvis by the translation of useful works had resulted only in heavy expenditure and the accumulation of unsaleable stock. Their feet were set on the only way and they would not move from it.

The party of reform—the Anglicists—thought that if the new learning was to thrive it must be planted on its own roots. An attempt to grow heather in the rice field! It might be so. But it seemed to promise well. They could point to the Vidyalaya with its hundreds of students who paid to be taught what it was the policy of government that India should learn and were already at work enlightening their fellow countrymen.

It cannot be a matter of dispute which of these views aligned itself with the policy embodied in the Government of India Act. Accordingly, when the issue was at last submitted for orders to the Governor-General in Council, the answer was immediate and decisive—a little too decisive—in favour of the Anglicists.

The responsibility for the decision is ordinarily attributed to Lord Macaulay, who had come out to India as outside member of the Governor-General's Council, and had been at once appointed to be chairman of the Education Committee. From what has gone before it will be apparent that Lord William Bentinck would have



had no difficulty in coming to his decision without Macaulay's help. But Macaulay, whose mind was clear on the subject before he came to India, intervened with the famous Minute which, if it had no other effect, did at least crow up the dawn; and we may be sure that, while he might on reflection have altered the tone of a document which had been written with running pen in the heat of an acrimonious controversy, he would not have objected to taking the responsibility for its conclusions.

The decision was announced on 7 March 1835, in a brief resolution of which the substance was that the great object of the government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India; that the medium to be used was the English language; and that the Education Fund should be employed on English education alone.

In their report of that year, the Committee—it was still Macaulay's consulship—showed that there was no danger of their misunderstanding their warrant or abusing their victory. The ultimate aim was to have a system of national education in the vernaculars which should embrace every village in the country. The effect of the resolution was merely to prefer western learning through English to eastern learning through Sanskrit and Arabic for the limited class with whom they were at present concerned.

So, for better or worse, the plan of campaign was decided on, its immediate objective, and its ultimate purpose. Nor was the decision come to in ignorance of its probable consequences, probable even if remote. It was no mere flourish of rhetoric with which Macaulay concluded his great speech in Parliament in support of the Government of India Bill (1813):

'It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system until it has outgrown that system; that by good government we may educate our subjects into a capacity for better government; that having become instructed in European knowledge, they may in some future age demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come I know not. But never will I attempt to avert it or to retard it. Whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English history. To have found a great people sunk in the lowest depths of slavery and superstition, to have so ruled them as to have made them desirous and capable of all the privileges of citizens would indeed be a title to glory all our own. . . .'

and so on to a proud and eloquent close.

One hundred years after the date of Lord Bentinck's resolution, the educational consequences of the policy which it inaugurated were to be seen, in one aspect, in a total of two hundred and twenty

<sup>1</sup> Loc. cit., A. B. Keith, *Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy* (1922), vol. i, p. 265.

thousand Indian schools and colleges in which some thirteen million scholars were enrolled; the political outcome was to appear in the passing of the Government of India Act of 1935, which provided for a federation of all the Provinces and States of India under an elective constitution and granted autonomy to the Provinces.

Was the decision of 1835 in favour of English learning well taken? Has the education which it enjoined raised the great people of India in the space of a century from the slough into which they had settled and rendered them not only 'desirous' but also 'capable of all the privileges of citizens'? Was the Act of 1935 neither premature nor unwise? If Parliament was well advised, Lord William Bentinck's policy stands approved. And otherwise? It makes but little difference. Events were in the saddle. No other policy conceivable at the time could have been long persisted in.

### 1835 TO THE MUTINY

It has been customary to belabour government for its adoption of the 'filtration theory' of education (educate the classes and the masses will take care of themselves), the assumption being that, with an open choice of filtration and irrigation before it, it had taken the indirect and stunted course. The metaphor is a bad one, as any metaphor is likely to be which one generation uses to condemn the principles and practice of its predecessors. Means, in the most comprehensive sense, were lacking for the enormous and age-long task of educating the general population or even creating such conditions as would make education seem desirable to them. That was the end to be kept in view. Meantime, in order that society should be provided with an agency to start the campaign, the limited task must be undertaken of educating its leaders. Nothing could be sounder so long as the ultimate purpose was kept steadily in view and the education of the classes, clamant on their own behalf, was not allowed to become an end in itself.

It is true, however, that the theorists of 1835 were unduly optimistic and that there was, as there was bound to be, an incomplete understanding of conditions. If you are to educate the leaders in the faith that they will with any speed draw or drive forward the education of the masses, you must be sure that it is the leaders you are educating. In fact, the pupils who enrolled themselves in the English schools were a motley throng, and their instinct was by no means to disperse to the villages and teach, but by all means to lead their working lives away from the villages. In a country of priests and peasants, the religious leaders and the landlords stood aloof.

But, as India progressed economically and administratively, those who had the advantage of an English education gradually,



by right of the prosperity, authority, and enlightenment it brought them, were to become themselves a leading class as powerful as any of the old, and having this attractive power that its ranks were not closed to the lower castes or to the common people. If the missionary spirit was still lacking, the force of emulation, the desire for emancipation, were in measure to take its place. What 'A' might do under the new rule, 'B' might also do, although 'A' was a Brahman or a Kayasth and 'B' was a thing of naught. The process was to be slow because at all times (the phrasing is contemporary) the condition of the public finances was such as to 'clog the action of the State' and Indian society was so 'matted with caste and custom' as to render it almost impermeable to the intrusions of reform. Ultimately—to look far ahead—the interaction of classes was not to lack even the missionary influence, although this was to come in political and not in religious guise.

To resume the narrative—the years that followed the resolution of 1835, conclusive as it seemed to be, were still a period of experiment and conflict. As was natural, English education held its ground in Bengal; but in Bombay, Madras, and the new administrative area created in 1843 by the separation of the North-Western Provinces from the Presidency of Fort William in Bengal, it was found that there was as yet but little effective demand for English, and the tendency was to lay the main stress on the vernaculars.

In Bengal the policy was pursued of establishing an English or Anglo-vernacular school at the head-quarters of each district, of developing a few of the more progressive of these to the status of colleges, and of linking school and college by a system of scholarships. The highest instruction was provided in the Presidency College of Calcutta, as the old Hindu College or Vidyalyaya was called when it was finally taken over by the government in 1854. In this college students might take advanced courses in English or oriental learning, or professional courses in law, medicine, or civil engineering. Various Mission bodies were energetically at work in the same field establishing and conducting institutions which were to leave their mark on the educational development of the country. The part played by the Missions is dealt with at length in another section of this work.

Nor was the government of Bengal entirely neglectful of the claims of the vernaculars. It was early realized that even in the head-quarters schools the vernaculars must receive due attention. The preparation of an ambitious series of vernacular text-books was put in hand. A Normal School for teachers was established and an experimental issue sanctioned in 1844 of 101 vernacular schools for the main centres of population throughout the province. And an Inspector of Schools was appointed. But even with

his assistance and the attraction of the new text-books, the vernacular schools were a failure. Ten years after their establishment, only thirty-three of them were still in existence, and these were languishing. An indication of the feelings of the people on the subject is to be found in a report from the Collector of Nattore in which he contrasts the attitude of the local public to the government school and to a native school taught by a *bairagi* in a barn, who wanted no help from the Sircar. They were lavish in their praises of their own school and laughed at its more pretentious rival; they did not need a foreign government to teach them their own language and called on the Collector to substitute an English school, of which they stood much in need. Discouraged by its failure, but not defeated, government was preparing in 1854 to tackle the business anew on lines which it was informed had proved successful in the North-Western Provinces.

Here the zeal of a famous Lieutenant-Governor, Mr. James Thomason, had given rise to a scheme of vernacular education which is applauded in all contemporary reports. It was economical to government yet ambitious in its reach. The essentials of the system were that government should at its own cost provide one superior school in each *tahsil* or local division which should serve as a model of what such schools ought to be and that by means of a special visiting and inspecting agency it should by all conciliatory means encourage existing indigenous schools and the opening of new schools of the kind where the local public could be persuaded to want them. While the system was well principled, it does not appear to have resulted in very rapid progress. In his report for 1851, the Visitor-General wrote of the blind distrust and suspicion which had still to be combated at every step. His survey, which covered eight districts with 50 towns and 14,572 villages, showed 3,127 schools of all sorts and 27,853 scholars. Twenty of the schools included English in their courses. Vernacular schools numbered less than half the total, being outnumbered by Persian. In these schools the masters themselves were frequently unable to read beyond monosyllables; the children learnt their letters and the multiplication table—that was all; pay ranged from less than one rupee (two shillings) a month to about five rupees; schools came and went, seldom lasting for more than eighteen months. In the Persian schools, which were of a rather higher class, Persian itself was the main or sole subject of instruction. The highest type of school was the Arabic *madrasa*, in which students might linger till well advanced in manhood. The Visitors, it will be admitted, had their work cut out for them and cannot be blamed if such progress as they were able to inspire was not a march to trumpets.



Of the Madras government during this period it may be said not unfairly that it was busy biding its time, leaving the field of positive effort largely in the competent hands of the Christian Missions. Bombay was more energetic and much engaged in educational disputes. In their last educational dispatch the Court of Directors took occasion to compliment the Presidency on its achievements in the field of vernacular education, the provincial Board of Education having then no fewer than 216 vernacular schools under their own management, not guttering like the thirty-three surviving candles of Bengal, but shining like good deeds in a naughty world and casting their beams influentially around.

As was usual, the renewal of the Company's charter at the end of the twenty years' period brought Indian affairs to the fore in Parliament and induced a liberal outlook. This showed itself in educational affairs in the famous dispatch of 1854, one of the most important documents in Indian educational literature.

It is not easy to give the gist in brief of a document which covers the whole field of national education in a hundred paragraphs and some fourteen thousand words. But we may follow the summary which the Directors themselves give towards the close of their dispatch. They are emphatic in their adherence to the policy of 1835:

'our object is to extend European knowledge throughout all classes of the people.'

Nor is there any essential change of method:

'this object must be effected by means of the English language in the higher branches of instruction and by that of the vernacular languages of India to the great mass of the people.'

In order that progress may be properly stimulated, directed, and controlled, they decide on the institution of a Department of Education in each province and the appointment of qualified directing and inspecting officers. Universities are to be established 'to provide the highest test and encouragement of liberal education'. Prepared as they are to sanction a considerable increase of expenditure, they realize that the gigantic task of educating India is far beyond the unaided efforts of government. In order that the people concerned may be encouraged to get to work on their own behalf, a grant-in-aid system must be brought into operation, under which the burden of higher education may be gradually devolved on them, leaving government free to direct its more special endeavours towards the education of the lower and middle classes, a duty hitherto insufficiently attended to.

Other points which may be noted are the Directors' approval of 'the noble exertions of Societies of Christians of all denominations', their satisfaction with the increasing desire of the Muslims to acquire European knowledge—an increase scarcely perceptible at this time to the ordinary observer—their cordial sympathy with the efforts which were being made for female education—

'by this means a far greater proportional impulse is imparted to the educational and moral tone of the people than by the education of men',

an oft-quoted maxim which seems to require more careful examination than it ordinarily receives. Finally, the dispatch touches—no more—on the subject of education and employment (in due course to fill the horizon), on practical education, medicine, civil engineering, schools of industry and design, and the teaching of agriculture in High Schools.

In the course of their introductory observations the Directors record with satisfaction the remarkable success of British influence in the uprooting of 'demoralizing practices and even crimes of a deeper dye' which had prevailed for ages in India, and look to the advance of education as the only means by which the result of such measures may be made permanent through 'gaining the further sanction of a general sympathy in the native mind'. How far such a sanction was yet from being general was shortly to be put beyond doubt. On 24 January 1857 General Hearsey, commanding at Barrackpore, reported to the government the opening episode of the Mutiny. The date is memorable also as that of the incorporation of the first Indian University, organ of a more insidious and more effective revolution.

It would be futile to inquire what share of the responsibility for the Mutiny must be borne by the educational policy which had been adopted, what share by other aggressions of good government. Discontent is natural under an alien rule. In India it was widespread. Leaders, religious and secular, reacted against a system which reduced their pride and influence; the common people saw the old order yielding place to a new which ignored their religion and seemed to threaten the foundations of their lives. Plotting and intrigue are endemic in the East. The forces of discontent might have muttered themselves to rest had they not been provided with a weapon. This was put into their hands by the neglect of government to ensure, as it might easily have ensured, the loyalty of the Indian Army.

The Mutiny brought to an end the government of the Company. It cleared the air. It taught the Indian people that a light hand on the reins did not mean a poor seat in the saddle and gave them a lasting respect for the power of Britain. A fair field was thus pro-



vided in which we might continue in peace our task of educating the people of India to take their place among the nations.

#### FROM THE MUTINY TO THE HUNTER COMMISSION

During the period immediately following the Mutiny government was mainly concerned with the restoration of peace and confidence in the troubled areas, the reorganization of the administration, and the establishment of the country's finances. The claims of education had to take a secondary place. They were not of course in danger of neglect. The Company had put its hand to the plough, and the Crown could not look back.

Early in 1859, the Secretary of State set to work to inform himself in regard to the educational situation, and, in particular, to ascertain what progress had been made in forwarding the policy of the 1854 dispatch. There had not, he found, been time to do much before the storm broke. The most important thing was that universities had been duly established at Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay. The first, with eleven colleges scattered over the wide territories of the Presidency of Fort William in Bengal, was already making progress. The others, with three colleges between them, had not yet quite found their feet. The total college enrolment was reported to be close on 3,000, a figure which must have included pupils reading in the school or preparatory departments of some of the colleges. Reports of school enrolment were very incomplete, but the Secretary had information, as to State schools, of 9,168 pupils in attendance at superior schools and some 40,000 at inferior schools. The figures are small. But a start had been made. Progress had been interrupted. It was now to be resumed. The policy of the Company was to be the policy of the Crown.

Fortunately, these were not impatient days. For the task was enormous, the obstacles formidable, the means conspicuously insufficient. Save for a few favoured classes the people were quite illiterate and disposed to maintain that happy condition; and the annual revenue of the country from all sources and for all purposes amounted only to some three or four shillings per head of the population. It is no wonder that the importance of proceeding by grant-in-aid rather than by direct effort should have been emphasized, or that the London model, the least expensive, should have been chosen for the universities of India. Examining bodies only, their expenses, confined to administration, could be met from the fee fund provided by the candidates for their degrees and certificates.

Looking on the one hand to the lack of any correspondence in measure between the resources available and the work to be done, on the other to the possibly sterilizing effect of regimentation on

cultural development, would it not have been better for government to have left education, subject only to an Olympian favour and control, to such agencies as had undertaken the responsibility in the majority of European countries? This might have been the better course had it been practicable. But in India it was not practicable. The enlightenment of the people was regarded as an imperative necessity. However slow the pace, it must be as rapid as conditions allowed, and no acceptable standard of order or efficiency could be attained in this or any branch of public activity unless government led the way and ordered the line of march. People had not yet learned to combine for public purposes. Caste stood against caste. Hindus and Muslims were at odds. Such educational activity as there was was sectional and exclusive. Energy was dispersed where concentration was essential. It was impossible, as we have seen, to proceed by encouraging the *tols* and *madrasas*. They would have nothing to do with the learning which it was the policy of government to advance. So far as they were necessary for the religious service of their communities and needed help, they could be helped. But this bore no relation to the main venture. The indigenous elementary schools might be improved and even, in moderation, multiplied. But these were limited to a small section of the population. If the traditionally unschooled castes and classes—agriculturists, labourers, women, depressed castes, outcastes, aboriginal races—were to be brought on to the educational scene, it was government, or the Missions, that must take the initiative, and it was government that must bear the main part of the burden until the people were ready to shoulder it themselves. While, therefore, on the abstract question, it may be possible to deplore the policy of State control, there appears to have been no alternative in India if work was to be proceeded with in earnest.

Let us return to the question of education in its relation to religion. Misgivings as to the intentions of government had been for ever set at rest by the terms of the Queen's proclamation, charging her officers, on pain of her highest displeasure, to abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of her Indian subjects. Call this rule neutrality, impartiality, tolerance, what we will, it conveyed an assurance on which Hindu and Muslim alike have placed an absolute reliance. So doing, it is not open to them to complain of an education divorced from religion or to charge the State with the blame for any aberrations or insufficiencies which they attribute to this cause.

If it was not possible for government to introduce Christian teaching into the State schools, it was equally debarred from favouring any other creed. Nor could it, for its part, very



usefully attempt to reconcile the new learning with the religion of the land. To the European, western education and Hindu beliefs were oil and water. What government could do in its schools to emulsify the educational draught it did, adapting courses and textbooks to Indian life and needs. The rest had to be left to the teachers. Indians themselves, teaching Indian boys in an Indian environment, they might be trusted to touch the spirit of their instruction to accord with the world in which they lived. If, as would be usual, the enrolment was not confined to one sect or creed, India at least was common ground. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* were not forgotten. Children continued to be taught at home, if not in school, 'to love their land with love far brought from out the storied past'. And direct religious instruction was not wanting. Outside the Brahmanical schools, this had never been part of the Hindu school course. But Hindu children were still taught their religion and their religious duties, as they had always been taught them, by the women of the household and the family priests. Nor were the Muslim pupils of public schools brought up in ignorance of the Koran or the tenets and ritual of Islam.

State management was in any case the exception. The great majority of secondary schools were under private management; and in these schools there could be no difficulty, other than the difficulties which inhered in the situation independent of the policy of government, in arranging for the provision of any religious teaching which might be acceptable to the communities they served. An example was ready to hand in the Mission schools, in all of which religion was taught. These schools, it is curious to observe, were not unpopular. Parents, both Hindu and Muslim, respected the missionaries and appreciated the atmosphere of piety in which their teaching proceeded. They knew that they need not enrol their children unless they wanted to and that, if they did, no pressure would be exercised upon them; and they felt assured that the influences of home life were strong enough to keep them true to the faith in which they had been born. Christian ethics were approved, and the children were insulated from Christian doctrine.

When all is said, however, it remains true that the accord between life and learning was incomplete and that culture suffered from a divided allegiance. This was in the nature of things. A closer accord would come as the public and religious life of the country modernized itself under the influence of progress and the education of women changed the outlook of the home. Meantime, girls were withheld from school; and the opposition to their education was to be strong and long enduring.

We may now consider the progress made during the first twenty-odd years of Crown government, up to the time when government appointed the first educational Commission to inquire as to the facts and advise as to action.

The most notable feature of the period had been the success of the universities and the impulse which this had given to secondary education. Arts and professional colleges now numbered 85 and enrolled between them 7,582 students. Secondary schools, Anglo-vernacular and vernacular, numbered just over 4,000, their enrolment 222,097. The greatest eagerness had been shown in Bengal, which had taken the lead in English education from the beginning, the growing demand for educated Indians in the administration, in the law courts, and in commercial offices assuring a steady market of well enough remunerated employment. Much has been made of the neglect of the vernaculars. It is a fair comment, so far as it goes, that Indian journalism proceeded from strength to strength, that the famous Bengali novelist, Bankim Chandra Chatterji, was one of the first graduates of Calcutta University, and that vernacular literature flourished and attained its highest development in that province in which English education was most advanced.

Amongst Hindus, the enrolment of higher schools and colleges consisted mainly of the clerky and professional classes—as was to be expected in a country in which occupation was dictated by tradition. For Muslims the old road to employment had been closed by the substitution of English and the vernaculars for Persian in the courts and offices. The community was falling behind. The new ways were not their ways. They stood aloof and continued to devote themselves to the Koran and Islamic learning while the Hindus took their place in the administration. It was at this time that Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan came forward to persuade his community in the Upper Provinces to compromise with their conservatism. He saw that the new order had come to stay and that, if the Muslims were not to lose ground which they might never be able to regain, they must make their account with things as they were. The new learning could be imparted in institutions established by Muslims for Muslims and animated by the faith and spirit of Islam. With the assistance of many co-religionists of rank and authority whom he had converted to his views, he established the Anglo-Muhammadian school or college at Aligarh which was to attract Muslim students from all parts of India and even from abroad, and was ultimately to develop into the Muslim University of Aligarh.

On an estimate with reference to a total population of just on 200 million, the number of children of school-going age (5 to 12)



would be between 45 and 50 million. The number of pupils in schools submitting returns to the Education Department in the year 1881-2 was 2,378,339, a proportion of, roughly, 1 in 20, the proportion for boys being 1 in 10 and for girls less than 1 in 250. Meagre as they are, these figures are yet better than the facts, for the majority of the pupils did not stay long enough in school to become permanently literate. The reasons for this will engage attention later when we come to consider the questions of wastage and compulsion. Meantime, it may suffice to say that the country was not yet ready for a general diffusion of learning, and that the attempt to outpace the times must always be a wasteful process. So long as the good sense of the common people revolted against school learning, it may indeed be held that money was better spent in creating the conditions which would make education desirable than in pressing it on people whom it could not benefit, and that, while the main front should not be neglected, the more important forces at this stage were those which were developing on the flank. Advantage must accrue to the educational cause from every lakh of rupees spent on roads and railways, from every contribution to the prosperity of the country.

In female education, the most notable event of the preceding period had been the establishment by government of the Bethune school or college at Calcutta, which was intended for, and succeeded in attracting, a small but increasing enrolment of girls of the higher classes of society. No equally interesting development had occurred in the interval. But numbers were rising. In 1881-2 close on 100,000 girls were at school, 6,366 of them in institutions in which they had the opportunity of reading beyond the rudiments. Messages of hope were being received from various areas in which it had been found possible to bring together beves of little girls to give newly started schools a good send-off. This was the most of it. The time was yet far away when orthodox parents, Hindu or Muslim, should send their girls to school with serious educational intentions. The little folk who did grace the schools with their presence came in at all times of the year, attended with extreme irregularity, bemused themselves for a few interrupted terms, and passed out, little accomplished, little done, to a long repose from learning. More than a generation later, a *cri de cœur* was to be wrung from a District Inspecting Officer, after half a lifetime of exhortation and disappointment: 'Female education', he lamented, 'is a need of all, but a desire of none.'

On a general view, while higher education was proceeding at a good pace, it was not diffusing its influence as rapidly as had been expected. No cultural liaison had been established between the institutions of higher learning and the villages, except indirectly

through the Bar and the Press and the Indian officers of government who had been educated under the new system. English-knowing men held their heads too high to engage in the ill-remunerated and lightly esteemed occupation of teaching the vernacular in village schools. The breach between higher and elementary education was denying to the village school system the qualified men whom it needed for its development. The majority of village schoolmasters knew no more than they were supposed to teach. Many knew much less. The work of training had, however, begun. The returns for 1881-2 show 113 training schools for teachers, 16 of them for women, with an enrolment of just over 3,000 teachers under training. The main part of their training was not of course educational theory or practice but the improvement of their general education.

Nor could satisfaction be felt with the qualifications of the teachers in the higher schools. Educational standards were lax. In the 1858 examination for the degree of B.A. in Calcutta, the examiners had failed 11 out of 13 candidates, and they had been similarly ruthless in the entrance examination. The lesson derived was not that teaching must be improved but that less exacting standards must be set. Some little encouragement, it may have been thought, would be appropriate at the start. But the relaxation of standards at the top meant low standards throughout. It was from the colleges, and not from the best students of the colleges, that the secondary schools got their teachers. Ill-qualified teachers sent up ill-prepared students. The colleges had to adjust their methods, the university its expectations, to the material they had to deal with. High standards were thus discouraged and a tendency to deterioration was admitted.

The appointment of Lord Ripon (1880) as Governor-General, with a liberal mandate, was followed by a number of popular measures, notably the development of local self-government throughout the country and the appointment of an Education Commission to inquire into the manner in which effect had been given to the principles of the pre-Mutiny dispatch and to advise as to action. At this time education was in the forefront of politics at home. The national system of compulsory instruction had been completed by the passing of the Elementary Education Act of 1880. The terms of the reference to the Commission accordingly laid special emphasis on the state of elementary education and the means by which it could be extended and improved throughout the country.

The Commission, after ample inquiry and discussion, reported in due course with two hundred resolutions for the acceptance of government. Writing ten years later, Sir William Hunter, who had



been chairman of the Commission, summarized the outcome of its labours as follows:

'In 1882-83 an Education Commission, appointed by Lord Ripon's Government, endeavoured to complete the scheme inaugurated in 1854 by the despatch of Lord Halifax. It carefully examined the conditions of education in each province, indicated defects, and laid down principles for further development. The results of its labours have been to place public instruction on a broader and more popular basis, to encourage private enterprise in teaching, to give a more adequate recognition to the indigenous schools, and to provide that the education of the people shall advance at a more equal pace along with the instruction of the higher classes. Female education and the instruction of certain backward classes of the community, such as the Muhammadans, received special attention from the Commission. The general effect of the recommendations is to develop the Department of Public Instruction into a system of truly national education for India, conducted and supervised in an increasing degree by the people themselves.'<sup>1</sup>

Inevitably, it may be added, the Commission took special cognizance of morals and discipline, making some useful recommendations but also concentrating, as Lord Moira had done, how many years before, on the improvement of conduct by manuals. One such was to be prepared for the guidance of schoolmasters, and an attempt was to be made to prepare a moral text-book for use in colleges based on the fundamental principles of natural religion, whatever these and that may be.

#### FROM THE HUNTER COMMISSION TO LORD CURZON

It was natural that with a Liberal government in power at home and an eminent Liberal statesman as Governor-General in India the reference to the Commission of 1882 should have stressed the popular cause. It was natural also that, in view of the utter inadequacy of the funds at the disposal of government, this should have had the effect of bringing the education of the classes and the education of the masses into opposition as claimants on the public revenues. And it was natural, if unfortunate, that in this competition the claims of higher education should have been belittled. In the interests of the people at large, no price in reason was too high to pay for the education of those who were to be placed in authority over them.

But government was hard put to it to find the money even for that measure of support which it at present gave to higher education. It could not face the cost of an expanding system. What more proper than that the classes which benefited directly

<sup>1</sup> W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Empire* (1893), p. 562.

should be called on to contribute by way of subscriptions or endowments. The Commission found that the grant-in-aid system had already proved itself in secondary schools. There were not only numbers of such institutions carrying on with small grants from government, but—and this was even better—many had established themselves without further backing than the fee rates received from the pupils. Higher education was in a fair way, it seemed, to supporting itself somehow without making any very heavy demand on the exchequer.

What the Commission do not seem to have taken sufficiently into reckoning was that even the State schools were not good schools, that the aided schools, as a class, were not so good as the State schools, and that the unaided schools were bad schools; further, that as government called the tune for all these schools, it was no matter who paid the piper, government was responsible for all alike. They were all recognized, all admitted into the public system.

Secondary education was, in fact, suffering from want of means and want of proper supervision and control. The aim was restricted. The middle schools prepared for the high schools, the high schools for the colleges, the colleges for the examinations of the universities. The universities for their part looked only to the service of government and the professions, which furnished the sole congenial market of well remunerated employment. Funds were not sufficient to provide properly for schools as they were, much less for better schools offering more varied courses. Buildings and equipment stood in need of improvement, teachers were underqualified and underpaid, standards low and discipline insecure, all in a drift from efficiency which must continue unless it was arrested.

Accepting the advice of the Commission, which it had indeed inspired, government declared its part in higher education to be that of a pioneer. Having opened the way it recognized no responsibility to do for the people what, it considered, the people could and ought to do for themselves. It was its policy, therefore, wherever possible, to retire from the field of direct instruction and help by reasonable subventions of money the operations of independent institutions. These observations applied to colleges as well as to schools. The new policy was detrimental to both.

At the same time, government accepted further recommendations of the Commission, designed to alleviate public feeling on the subject of the employment of Indians in positions of high trust and importance, to the effect that the recruitment of inspecting officers from Europe should be gradually reduced and that Indian graduates



should be more largely employed in the government colleges. This also, in so far as it discouraged the recruitment of expert persons, was damaging. The character and quality of higher education depended on sound instruction in and through the medium of English, and it was desirable that more, not fewer, men should be appointed, speaking English as their mother tongue, who were familiar with western institutions and whose minds moved without stumbling in the world of western ideas.

It will be borne in mind that the best Indian talent was not yet available for educational service. In India, as elsewhere, teaching has at all times attracted a number of first class men as their natural vocation. But no more in India than elsewhere have such men been common. They are the salt of the educational earth. The rank and file are labourers for hire; and even in the government schools the hire was low. In the aided, and still more in the unaided, schools funds were insufficient to offer anything like reasonable pay and prospects. Competition kept fees low. The 'reasonable subventions' made by government were small and hard to come by. High schools and colleges, scholars and students increased rapidly in number, and standards declined.

The loss on higher education was not compensated by a notable advance in primary education. Effort seemed to break almost in vain on the vast indifference of the masses; and money was not forthcoming to allow of full advantage being taken of such successes as were achieved. After first line needs had been provided for, there was but little spending money. Government was unable to come in strength to the help of the self-governing bodies—municipalities and district and local boards—on whom, with a view to the intensification of local effort, the charge of primary education had been devolved throughout the country. The boards, for their part, showed no crusading spirit. They had other cares, roads for example, which seemed to them more urgent. They had no powers of taxation—the rural community was almost untaxable—and, apart from grants made to them by the State for special or general purposes, their income was too small to allow them to launch themselves on anything. In the main it consisted of the local rates and receipts from such minor sources as pounds, tolls, and ferries. The rates were levied at one anna in the rupee of the land revenue and brought in an income amounting, on the average, to about a penny annually per head of the population for whose educational and other needs the boards had to provide. It is necessary to stress this disproportion between the end and the means, because it was apparent in every department of educational enterprise. Constantly, in India, the attempt has been made to realize western dreams on an eastern budget; constantly, the disparity

between expectation and performance has resulted in disappointment and opened the way to criticism.

At the time of their annual accounting, educational administrators, in their degree, must have looked ruefully at the figures of their achievement. The increase in the school enrolment lagged far behind the increase in the population. For ever climbing up the climbing wave, they were in no position to satisfy their governments with statistical testimonies of progress. There were, of course, more encouraging aspects. Conditions were improving. The quality of the opposition was relaxing. The villages were being brought closer to one another. There was more intercourse, an enlargement of the village horizon. Conservatism was less absolute. Castes were beginning to send their children to school which had not done so before. Girls were coming forward in larger numbers and staying a little longer at school: 'the first hundred thousand' had increased more than fourfold, and fore-runners were appearing at the examinations of the universities. There were signs also of weakening in the conservatism of the Muslims. Courses and text-books were improving. Teachers were being trained in larger numbers. Advance and improvement were in the air.

The Commission had been disquieted by the exclusively literary character of the school courses and had recommended the establishment of a 'modern' side in high schools. Alternative courses were accordingly offered in a number of selected schools preparatory to commercial, engineering, and even agricultural careers. They proved unsuccessful. The educated classes would not be turned from their chosen path. It was becoming apparent, however, that for many of the wayfarers the road to the university must end in tribulation. Lord Lansdowne drew pointed attention to this when he addressed the University of Calcutta as its Chancellor in 1889:

'I am afraid we must not disguise from ourselves that if our schools and colleges continue to educate the youth of India at the present rate, we are likely to hear even more than we do at present of the complaint that we are turning out every year an increasing number of young men whom we have provided with an intellectual equipment admirable in itself but practically useless to them on account of the small number of openings which the professions afford for gentlemen who have received this kind of education'.<sup>1</sup>

The subject had already engaged consideration from another point of view. In the interesting resolution of government, signed by Sir Anthony Macdonnell, which is prefaced to Sir Alfred Croft's *Review of Education in India* (1886), the Government of India

<sup>1</sup> Loc. cit., H. R. James, *Education and Statesmanship in India*.



pointed to the need of industrial occupation for a population rapidly outgrowing the means of support supplied by a too conservative system of agriculture. Scientific methods, they observed, were wanted to develop the natural resources of the country and to improve its agriculture, its products, and its manufactures. The solution was not obvious. It was true that there was a growing application of capital to industry. But this had not yet gone far enough to make it anything but premature to establish technical schools on such a scale as in European countries. To do so would merely 'aggravate the present difficulties by adding to the educated unemployed a new class of professional men for whom there was no commercial demand'. But the subject was of such extreme importance and the insignificance of what had hitherto been done was so conspicuous that they ordered an industrial survey in each province and the appointment of committees to advise as to action.

It is interesting to observe that the question of education and employment was so seriously regarded at this early date and that government addressed themselves so earnestly to its solution. The University of Calcutta, who were consulted in due course, were not helpful. They would not adapt their entrance examination to the bifurcation proposed or adopted for the schools, but were prepared to go so far to meet the situation as to substitute Huxley's *Primer of Science* for mensuration and to allow any candidate who desired to undergo this experience to be examined in drawing.

In the interval of fifty years which has since elapsed the public have never ceased to press for more and wider facilities for technical education. Resolutions have been passed by the legislatures. Provincial committees and conferences have debated and come to conclusions. And action has been taken, slowly—it does not yet amount to very much—yet always rather ahead of than behind the times. Results have been disappointing. For the demand has not come from enterprise calling for an outlet but from the literate classes, who could not or would not betake themselves to industrial occupations, but were at once patriotically intent on their country somehow prospering, and eager for the opportunities of professional and clerical employment which industrial progress might afford. The main problem still stands, waiting for its full solution on an understanding and acceptance of its conditions by the people concerned. This is on the way. But, for the present, the story of action is a small-scale record of trial and error.

On a general view of education as a State interest during these decades it would seem that in the later years at least drift was more apparent than resolve. In higher education, it was a period of lost opportunities. Lacking the means to provide for advance, government did not take effective means to control it. The lessons of

discipline, of order, of moderation and restraint, important everywhere, essential in the East, were not sufficiently impressed. The development of secondary and collegiate education under popular influence was allowed to gather momentum and to pass unchecked beyond the point at which it would still have been possible for government to intervene decisively with orders of reform. The politically minded classes of the country had come to regard education as a national need. That way was the path to freedom; and they were ready to resent any innovation which might restrain the pace of advance or diminish the liberty they had been allowed to assume of educating themselves as they pleased.

This was the temper when Lord Curzon arrived, intent on reform, to devote himself with a will to the educational service of the country.

#### FROM LORD CURZON TO THE DYARCHY<sup>1</sup>

To this task, into which, to use his own words, he threw himself with a burning zeal, Lord Curzon brought clear vision, a high purpose, a splendid ambition for the future of India within the Empire, a devouring industry which spared him no extremity of effort, and an intolerance of the slipshod or second-rate, of anything less than the highest which devoted effort might attain. Financially the times were favourable. Railways and irrigation were at last bringing in a good return. There was money to spend.

With all this, after two years of thorough investigation and five of resolute effort, during which he strove to convert what he saw as a purposeless drift into an onward march to music, he left education a battlefield. Too scornful in his reprobation of what seemed to him unworthy, too little concerned to search out and develop what was sound and native to the soil in the systems and practices which he condemned, he fell far short of the achievement which might have been his had his temperament enabled him to win the sympathies of the people and enlist their co-operation in a congenial progress. None the less he left education invigorated in all its parts. For good or ill, there could no longer be indifference. Government was awakened to the fullness of its responsibility. The public were aroused to the assertion and defence of their interests. If there was apparent opposition, there was yet but one prevailing purpose, and in the current which flowed through the turmoil India was to be borne rapidly forward to the attainment of her goal.

The main battle was fought over the universities. With Eton

<sup>1</sup> The text of the speeches of Lord Curzon which are quoted from or summarized in this section is that of Sir Thomas Raleigh's *Lord Curzon in India* (1906).



and Oxford in his heart, Lord Curzon looked with an extremity of distaste on these important corporations which dominated higher education in India, seeing in them

'a huge system of active but often misdirected effort, over which, like some evil phantom, seemed to hover the monstrous and maleficent spirit of Cram'.

They set no other aim than that of passing examinations and qualifying for employment. Teachers, instead of thinking only of the moral and mental development of their pupils, were absorbed with percentages and passes and tabulated results. Standards were everywhere in need of improvement—standards of teaching, of examination, of staffing, of accommodation, of equipment, of recognition, of affiliation, of control. Administration was in the hands of unwieldy bodies, the Senates, entrusted with their duties for life and chosen for every reason except that of educational fitness. The universities and their colleges were a mere conflict of jarring atoms. Something must be done to bring them into union, to give the universities an organic life, and to enable them to inspire higher education in India with a nobler ideal.

A Universities Commission was appointed (1902). Consultation and inquiry followed, and legislation was framed and pushed through in the face of determined opposition in the legislature and in the Press. The conflict was political rather than educational. Lord Curzon's announcement that reform was to be taken in hand had been well enough received. But, as the Commission proceeded with its work, suspicions were aroused. The impression was gaining ground that Lord Curzon was not in sympathy with the political aspirations of the people and that the proposed reform was sinister in its intention. And there was a reaction against the overweening emphasis which was being placed on efficiency—a western efficiency so unrelenting in its demands as to threaten a strait jacket for educational enthusiasm. The 'narrow, bigoted, inexpansive rule of experts' was, it was feared, to be brought into play in restraint of that free development which was India's right and her necessity.

In a farewell address to the Directors of Public Instruction in which he reviewed the educational events of his administration, Lord Curzon referred with particular satisfaction to the university legislation:

'I do not regret the battle and the storm since I am firmly convinced that out of them has been born a new life for Higher Education in India.'

In fact, no such rebirth was to come from the reforms, nor any advantage which might not have been peacefully effected with

a little persuasion, a little encouragement, a little help. The constitution of the universities was revised. Teaching powers were conferred on all of them. Some very inefficient institutions passed out of existence. With the aid of an appropriation of twenty-five lakhs of rupees many colleges were enabled to improve their buildings, their equipment, their residential arrangements. The teaching of science was put on a better footing. College staffs were increased, classes restricted in number. Courses were reconsidered and revised. Colleges were no longer left to their own devices but were regularly visited and advised by inspectors appointed by the universities. A real effort was made for some years to bring about a general improvement. But numbers increased rapidly beyond the power of the colleges to provide for or the economic system of the country to absorb. The new organization of the universities, which should have been so different, rapidly took on the complexion of the old. After twelve years, things had come to such a pass in Bengal that another Commission—the Sadler Commission—had to be appointed (1917)

'to enquire into the conditions and prospects of the University of Calcutta and to consider the question of a constructive policy in relation to the questions which it presents'.

Although this reference was nominally confined to the University of Calcutta, it was in reality nation-wide in its scope, for the problems presented by Calcutta were present or in prospect in the other universities also.

Between 1907 and 1917 the number of college students had risen from 17,356 to 61,200. The rapidity of the advance in the colleges was paralleled in the secondary schools. During the same decennium the enrolment of boys in high and middle schools, which had increased in the previous twenty years at the rate of 10,000 yearly, rose from 473,000 to 1,107,000, at the rate of over 63,000 yearly. Neither in colleges nor in secondary schools was there any sign that a limit was at hand. The index still pointed on.

The radical causes of the accelerating numbers must be sought rather in economic and social conditions than in the educational policy of the government, which was more concerned with the unpopular task of striving to improve or even to maintain the quality of the supply than with stimulating the demand. The population was increasing rapidly. With the growing numbers and the rise in the cost of living, the economic status of the Hindu middle classes was being progressively impaired. Larger and larger numbers had to qualify themselves to compete for some employment which might enable them to relieve the strain on the family income. The employment they looked for was of course the employ-



ment determined by their traditions. The way to such employment, the only way, was through the high school and the university.

The pressure was intensified by the competition of the Muslim community, who were growing increasingly alive to their own interests and pushing rapidly to the front; and the lower castes, waking to the call of opportunity, were taking their lead from the classes who had so long kept them under and setting their hearts on the same objects of aspiration and endeavour as their masters.

Efforts of diversion were made, as we have seen, by varying the courses in high schools and by opening technical schools. But the tide set undivertibly in one direction, towards the gates of the universities. The only discouragement lay in the insufficiency of remunerative occupations and appointments. The market of acceptable employment, in the law, in government and commercial offices, in schools, on the railways, had undoubtedly developed with the growing wealth of the country. But the increasing supply kept no pace with the demand. For the majority, higher education was proving an apprenticeship to discontent.

Dissociated by immemorial tradition from labour or commercial enterprise, it was not unnatural that the educated classes should see in technical education a solution of all their difficulties and should blame the indifference of government for their continuing disappointment. Government was, in fact, doing all that was practicable. Lord Curzon's influence had been marked in this, as in all other educational activities, and the lead which he gave had been vigorously followed up. Surveys were made, conferences convened, the subject fully discussed. State technical scholarships were created to give enterprising Indian students an opportunity of getting the best technical education which was to be had in western countries; and the example of government was followed by at least one private association which made grants to students for the same purpose. Government even did some pioneering in industry with educational intent, as in the leather and tanning industries in Madras. Professional education in medicine, engineering, agriculture, forestry, veterinary science was extended and improved. Technical, commercial, and agricultural schools were established.

The results of all this activity, important as they might be in their own setting, had no noticeable effect on the educational situation. Although it was easier, despite the cost, to establish technical institutions than to get students, even with stipends, to attend them, it remained a reproach against government that it was not doing enough. Neither persuasion nor experience availed to dispel the illusion that commerce and industry must flourish if commerce and industry were taught in schools, and that

employment must follow on the economic blossoming. It was in this faith that the independent or so-called 'National' schools sought to teach a trade in addition to the ordinary matriculation learning and, to give another instance, that one district authority known to the writer distributed to its primary schools an issue of blacksmiths' anvils.

The anvils were an extreme instance of a general tendency. Every reformer sought to ride his hobby-horse in the village school. Sanitation, hygiene, first aid, land tenure, co-operative credit, postal wisdom, and the like pushed their way into the syllabuses. A great deal too much was expected of the teacher. In the ordinary village school the source of all this learning and enterprise was a dispirited drudge, poorly educated and, in most parts of the country, very poorly paid, who was in sole charge of four or five classes of little boys. With an average attendance of two days in three, he was confronted by a different selection of his pupils every day. Unpunctuality added to his difficulties. There are no clocks in the Indian countryside. Nor does this exhaust the tale of his troubles. For the lowest class, which gave the whole school a dragging start, was composed of children at many different stages, enrolled at all times of the year according to caprice or the influence of their horoscopes, and further confused by the presence of children, continuing from the previous year or years, who had been unable to make progress.

It is fair to say that during these years—and they were a period of great educational activity—much was done to improve the pay and the qualifications of village schoolmasters and to help them in their work. There was a large increase in the inspecting or supervisory staff. Training schools were multiplied. Pay, although in the poorer provinces it was still far short of the wages of unskilled labour, had been considerably increased. It was no longer possible at the close of the period to find teachers serving in publicly managed schools on salaries of less than Rs. 8 a month.

There are many phases of educational effort in India which cannot be dealt with in a summary record. Europeans and Anglo-Indians, for example, had a system of education of their own, owing much to Catholic Mission agency, which was quite independent of the Indian systems in the various provinces. The old indigenous systems, Hindu and Muslim, continued and flourished in a state of free grace, government helping and encouraging but not interfering. And there were independent systems, mostly under missionary control, for aboriginal peoples and hill races. Some of the pupils from these races were proving their quality, taking advanced degrees and occupying high places on the university lists. In an institution of university status in Sylhet a distin-



guished member of a hill race was to be found lecturing to Brahmans of the plains on the philosophy of their religion. In another—a high school this, where hill boys studied Latin instead of Sanskrit for matriculation—the sons of head-hunters civilized themselves by reading about Lalage.

The Hindu community had not yet faced the educational problem presented by the unclean or external castes. It seemed, indeed, almost insoluble except by escape from Hinduism to the freedom of Islam or to the Christian fold. The higher castes were too much concerned with their own ambitions and difficulties to hamper themselves by offering a helping hand to the castes beyond the pale. Here and there, it is true, an altruistic spirit was in evidence. The Ramakrishna Mission, for instance, distinguished itself by opening schools for untouchables. However well meant, such schools were worse than useless, serving merely by their segregation to emphasize the degradation they were intended to relieve. Not in this way was the time-old wrong to be redressed, but by welcoming the outcastes to the public schools which they helped to maintain and throwing open to them the doors of the temples.

So it was that on the eve of the new constitution the progress which had been achieved was unbalanced in its parts. Politically a rapid advance had been made on democratic lines. Socially and economically the classes were moving very slowly and reluctantly to the establishment of such conditions as might at once satisfy their own requirements and provide a sound foundation for democratic institutions.

#### THE PERIOD OF THE DYARCHY

Under the new constitution which came into force in 1921, education was classed as a 'provincial' subject and, under that head, as 'transferred'. In each province educational policy and administration were now in the hands of the people of the province acting through a popular Minister and a Legislative Council with an elected majority.

The auspices were unfavourable. It was a period of economic distress and of political turmoil, amounting in parts of the country almost to revolution. The National Congress, intent on rendering the administration impossible rather than on advancing the public welfare, stood aloof from all the ways and works of government. Immediately before the inauguration of the reformed constitution, it had resolved on a boycott of recognized schools, deciding to replace them by 'national' institutions which would breed a new race of Indians free from the 'slave mentality' induced by the established system. Hindi was to take the place of English as the all-India language, and the use of the *charkha*, or spinning-wheel,

was to be taught as the first step in a campaign which would render India economically independent of the West, encourage simplicity of life, and invite the golden age. But the agitation proved essentially destructive. No strength of educational purpose was developed. Such 'national' institutions as were opened functioned for a short time fitfully and disappeared. Large numbers of youths who had been called away from school to help in the work of regeneration and disorder, and did not resume their studies when the activity died down, were left adrift without occupation or prospects to devote their broken lives and untrained minds to the 'national' cause, material ready for the next kindling when it should come. Between 1920 and 1922, the enrolment of high schools declined by over 37,000, of colleges by over 6,000. The numbers affected to animosity, to indiscipline, whose minds were at this time given a bias against constituted authority, were immensely larger.

As the depression lifted, the forward movement was resumed. New schools were opened, pupils pressed forward in growing numbers. The pace was very rapid in the Punjab and Madras, less so in Bengal, Bombay, and other provinces which had suffered more deeply from the non-co-operation movement. In the main, expansion was due to forces which were independent of government action in the Education Department, and Ministers were in a weaker position than the old unitary government had been to order or regulate the advance.

The following table gives a summary view of the increases which took place in British India during the first five years of the reformed constitution:

Year	Stages of instruction in recognized institutions			Cost to public funds
	Collegiate	Secondary	Primary	
1922	58,837	653,416	6,897,147	Rs. 114,961,178
1927	83,890	868,271	9,247,617	Rs. 135,923,968
Increase	42.6%	32.9%	34.1%	35.63%

During this period there was no change of educational policy. But two important developments may be noticed which had their inception in the period prior to the institution of the dyarchy—the movement for university reform and the introduction of the principle of compulsion into legislation for primary education, the first official, the second popular in its inspiration.

The extent of the areas to which the universities ministered, the unmanageable increase of their responsibilities, the obstacles in the way of reforming them which had been demonstrated by the failure of the legislation of 1904 had indicated to government the pro-



priety of a new departure which might at once provide them with an example of better things and, it was hoped, help to keep their expansion within bounds. The new policy was announced in the Government of India's Educational Resolution of 1913:

'It is necessary to restrict the area over which the affiliating universities have control by securing in the first instance a separate university for all the leading provinces in India and, secondly, to create new local teaching and residential universities within each province in harmony with the best modern opinion as to the right road to educational efficiency'.<sup>1</sup>

This was followed in 1917 by the appointment of the Calcutta University Commission to tackle the question of higher education in Bengal and, incidentally, to give a lead to India as a whole—for the conditions present in their extreme form in Bengal were present also in the university-ridden systems of the other provinces.

The Report of the Commission—one of the most interesting of Indian educational documents—conceived and written in a very helpful and sympathetic spirit, found that the web of higher education in Bengal was 'of a mingled yarn, good and ill together'. But the ill was so serious and so threatening as to make reform imperative.

In secondary education, the university had been burdened with responsibilities which it had been unable effectively to discharge. Under its influence the matriculation examination had become the sole aim and end of high schools in the province, and the university had not the men or the means to enable it to secure that, even with this limited ambition, the schools were—as they in fact were not—working to any acceptable standard of efficiency. A change of control was essential.

The complex solution which the Commission evolved need not be set forth here. Accepted in principle by the Government of India, it required for its purposes, even at the start, funds far beyond the resources of a needy province and a degree of co-operation on the part of the interests affected which would have been difficult to secure at any time and was quite out of the picture in the stormy circumstances attending the change of government. In the outcome, Calcutta University remained unreformed, and the system of university and secondary education in Bengal to-day is but little altered from what it was in 1904. Exception may be made of the Dacca area, for Dacca has now a university and a school system of its own. And there is another change which should be mentioned. The University of Calcutta, which had already embarked on post-graduate teaching, was encouraged to

<sup>1</sup> Resolution of Government of India, dated 21 February 1913.

develop this branch of its activities, with results which were in many respects advantageous but not in all. For the funds required for teaching and research work, in so far as they were not supplied by private benefactions or by the grants grudgingly given by a government which the university did little to conciliate, could only be provided by the success of the university as a business concern, the presentation of large numbers at its examinations, and the ultimate emergence of reasonable numbers for post-graduate study. It would be wrong to assume that the argument from fees was consciously allowed control. The university had a more compelling plea in the insatiable demand for higher education and the need of the country for enlightened citizens. Either way, the result was the same. The university got its students and its funds. Standards remained low. Numbers increased. And—a consideration of importance—unemployment grew ever more widespread and more dangerous.

In other provinces the opening of new universities on principles contemplated by the resolution of 1913 and elaborated on the soundest lines by the University Commission, proceeded apace. There are now eighteen universities in India instead of five. The new universities have not, however, relieved the pressure on the old, and Calcutta is now responsible for a larger number of schools and colleges, and a larger number of students, than when the Commission regarded it as overcharged in 1918. In 1936 over 25,000 candidates presented themselves for matriculation from schools presided over by Calcutta University; over 30,000 students were studying for its diplomas and degrees. Let it none the less be stated that, loosely organized as it may be, the University of Calcutta to-day is something much greater, for good or for ill, than the concourse of jarring atoms, presided over by the 'maleficent spirit of Cram' which it seemed when it was first condemned. It is a government within the government, exercising almost independent authority. It has done good work of recent years in advanced teaching and research; and, if its control of education in the high schools and colleges has been educationally, politically, and economically detrimental, this is by no means the view of the people of Bengal. The policy of the university has had behind it the great body of public opinion. There can be few educational institutions which have commanded so much affection and so much loyalty and confidence.

Let us turn now to the second of these developments, the introduction of the principle of compulsion. On this issue, the present writer has had but one opinion to express since he first advised upon it nearly a generation ago. He held then, as he holds now, that the general enforcement of school attendance in India, even



for boys, is impossible, and that so long as this is so the introduction of compulsion piecemeal must be impolitic. It is a view which has not commended itself to the impatience of reformers.

As early as 1906 an Act envisaging compulsion had been passed in the State of Baroda. The first Act of a provincial legislature followed twelve years later; and by 1927 all the major provinces had similar enactments on their statute books. The legislation was permissive—it did not of itself compel, but took the right to compel—and, outside the Punjab, no very serious effort was made to make use of its provisions. Where the Acts were applied, the compulsion was in its nature, to borrow a phrase from a contemporary report, 'coaxing rather than coercive'. Such as it was, it extended by 1927 to 1,500 rural areas in British India, of which all but 72 were in the Punjab.

In 1929 the cause of compulsion received the influential support of the Auxiliary Committee appointed to advise the Statutory Commission on the educational aspects of their inquiry. The Hartog Committee, as this committee is generally called, strongly favoured compulsion, if only as a corrective of what they regarded as the waste and inefficiency of the voluntary system. They laid stress in their report on the failure of education generally under the systems in force to achieve its essential purposes—there was no relation, they held, between the effort expended and the results attained. This was especially true in the field of primary education. The waste in the village schools was appalling, time, energy, and money being spent on the schooling of children the majority of whom did not stay long enough at school to remain literate.

The impression made on the Committee was natural, their reaction obvious. As the first purpose of the schools is to teach children to read and write, it would seem to be a common-sense conclusion that in so far as they fail to do so their efforts are wasted. But there is another point of view. Concluding a report on the subject in 1922, the present writer observed:

"There is no school, however stubborn in its illiteracy, which does not convey some message of hope. The most backward are the outposts of progress."

And again, in 1930:

"The Hartog Committee have declared themselves appalled by the waste of money and effort in the present "voluntary and haphazard system", estimating the waste at about sixty per cent. of the total expenditure."

"This is a subject, the subject of wastage, which has engaged constant attention from Sir Bampfylde Fuller's time until today and must

<sup>1</sup> *Progress of Education in Assam, 1917-18 to 1931-2* (1923), p. 64.

continue to engage attention until compulsion is universally applied, and after. But for my part, I am disposed to be less impressed by its importance than I was when it was new to me. It is true that there is wastage—there is wastage in all human effort—but it is not, I think, present in any horrifying degree in the village school system. A very large proportion of the children who attend primary schools do not stay long enough to become literate. The number of literates in the province is none the less rapidly increasing; and we are getting them cheap. According to my estimate, the cost of adding each unit to the roll of literates by means of education in a vernacular school cannot be more than Rs. 50, or some Rs. 10 per head per year over the five years of the village school course. If my calculations are not altogether out . . . there would seem to be no great waste of money. And, as regards effort, we may properly regard the effort spent on the schooling of those who leave before they are literate as an agriculturist would look on the work of preparing the ground for the seed, clearing and ploughing and harrowing. In due course with a better tilth we shall get a better crop'.<sup>1</sup>

Nor could compulsory school attendance do much of itself to improve conditions in the village schools. Better teaching and accommodation, more regular and punctual attendance, these might be achieved without compulsion. And it is not to such considerations that we must look for the root explanation of wastage, but to the conditions of life in rural India. Parents are not satisfied that education does their children good, and it deprives them of their services. The Indian peasant has ordinarily no occasion, religious or secular, to read or to write. Such reckoning as he has to do he can do without formal instruction. Education, further, is an expensive luxury. Even free education costs money, and money is a commodity which is very scarce in the Indian countryside. It is not only that the child has to be supplied with books, slates, and other school materials, the cost rising with the stage of advancement; the matter of apparel is even more important. The cultivator's child who would at home spend most of his days in a loin-cloth has to be much more expensively equipped for school-going.

In such circumstances, 'coercive' compulsion was out of the question and little more was to be expected from persuasion masquerading as compulsion than from plain encouragement. By the year 1936, however, the compulsory Acts were being experimentally applied in some ten thousand out of the half million village communities of India. Over eight thousand of these were in the Punjab, the province in which education has of late years made the most rapid strides. But even in the Punjab and on this limited scale the venture has not yet proved itself. In his report for 1936 the Educational Commissioner with the

<sup>1</sup> *General Report on Public Instruction in Assam, 1927-30* (1931), p. 19.



Government of India makes this observation on the Punjab experiment:

'If the census of the figures of wastage in the compulsory areas in the Punjab were taken, the doubtful value of the success of compulsion would be apparent.'

Reports from the United and the Central Provinces were equally discouraging. As to Bombay, always a leader in primary education:

'In even such a forward province as Bombay, the complaint is made that in most cases compulsion is only on paper and that the increase in enrolment in compulsory areas is no better than in areas under voluntary education'

—a conclusion which might have been arrived at many years earlier by comparing the figures in the State of Baroda, the pioneer of compulsion, with those of the voluntary districts of British India adjoining.

Madras, Bengal, and Assam seem to have escaped disappointment by refraining from any serious attempt to apply their Acts in practice.<sup>1</sup>

Despite these evidences of failure, reports come through of a determination, in phrases of the moment, to 'stamp out' illiteracy, or to 'liquidate' illiteracy, to do something impatient and oppressive about illiteracy in the name of liberty, instead of encouraging voluntary agencies by all possible means and concentrating on the establishment of conditions which would make literacy appropriate.

Even a summary exposition of the difficulties in the way of adopting free and compulsory education for the masses as a working policy in India would take more space than can be allowed. Let it suffice to consider the issue from one point of view only—that of public finance.

Current figures for England and Wales show the cost to public funds of elementary education in these countries to be £16. 17s. 1d. per head. On this basis the bill for the free and compulsory education of the 53 million children between the ages of six and fourteen in British India would amount to some £900,000,000 annually, that is about eighty times the total expenditure on education of all kinds and grades from public funds in India in 1935-6, or, to give another comparison, between five and six times the total revenues, central and provincial, of the country. Undoubtedly elementary education in India would cost much less than elementary education in England. But the English figures can be divided by ten and still leave compulsory education outside practical politics. We are

<sup>1</sup> *Education in India in 1935-6* (1938), p. 44.

again faced by the contrast between western plans and eastern resources

During the years of discord intervening between the Hartog Committee's survey and the institution of provincial self-government under the Government of India Act (1935), the Education Ministries in the greater part of British India were not in funds, or otherwise in strength, to attend to the Committee's counsel or to develop an independent educational policy. Education took its own course, without effective planning or control. Apart from a set-back in 1930, when political agitation was at its height and schools and colleges were again deeply involved, the rising tide of numbers received no check. A comparison may be made between the summary figures for 1927 already mentioned and recently published statistics, those for 1936:

Year	<i>Stages of instruction in recognized institutions</i>			<i>Cost to public funds</i>
	<i>Collegiate</i>	<i>Secondary</i>	<i>Primary</i>	
1927	81,890	868,271	9,247,617	Rs. 155,923,968
1936	113,213	1,456,421	11,276,516	Rs. 162,299,025
Increase	34%	67.7%	21.9%	4%

Detailed figures have not yet been published such as would allow of a full understanding of these returns. But it is plain that the disparity between the increase in numbers and the increase in cost cannot in a world of rising standards point to an increase of efficiency.

It will be observed that the large increase in the primary school enrolment (1922-7) had carried on to the secondary schools (1936). It promises in due course, unless there is a change of conditions not yet foreseen, to carry farther and to render still more unmanageable in the years immediately ahead the problem of unemployment amongst the educated classes. When the writer was last in the East (1935-6), an Indian friend complained to him that in his joint family alone there were no fewer than fifteen university graduates without employment of any kind.

#### LOOKING BEFORE AND AFTER

The tradition of education is old in India. There were many schools and institutions of higher learning in the country when Britain took over. A century has passed since the inception of the policy of educating India on western lines. Ninety per cent. of the people are still illiterate and the national economy is not sufficiently advanced to provide suitable employment for more than a fraction



of the educated minority. Progress has been hampered, and is still hampered, by the use of a foreign language for all the purposes of higher education. The authority of religion has been weakened and with it the social order which it sanctioned. Our education has ignored religion and brought nothing of equal validity to take its place.

All this is asserted. In the main, it is true. But the presentation is partial. A juster view will regard not only what has been omitted and what is still to do but what has been accomplished, what has been well done, with what means, in face of what difficulties, with what purpose, and with what measure, what promise, of success. On such a view Britain may await with equanimity a judgement on the educational policy and labours of her government in India.

The fact that what has been done stands fairly upon record has not unhappily sufficed to put it beyond question. Let us look at this.

In the course of controversy prior to the introduction of the new constitution, a tendency declared itself amongst Indian politicians of the Left to see India as it was before the British occupation in the reputed colours of its prime and to deny the authenticity of the 'Material and Moral Progress' so steadily recorded by the Government of India, year after year, in the accounts of its stewardship prepared for presentation to Parliament. Educationally, it was said, the people of India had not progressed under British rule—they were indeed more backward in the present day than they had been when we began to take a hand in their affairs. Adopted by Mr. Gandhi, this contention passed into currency in India and Europe with the sanction of his prevailing name. In a speech delivered at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London on 20 October 1931, Mr. Gandhi stated as an unchallengeable fact that India was more illiterate then than it had been fifty or a hundred years before, the reason being that 'the British administrators, when they came to India, instead of taking hold of things as they were, began to root them out'.<sup>1</sup>

Statistics covering the fifty-year period are at hand in the censuses of 1881 and 1931 to show that, despite an increase of nearly a hundred million in the population in the fifty years, the number of literates per thousand had more than doubled for males and had increased over fivefold for females. The figures for 1831, were they forthcoming for comparison with those for 1881, would undoubtedly tell a similar tale of progress for the earlier half-century. But we are without statistical reports for the earlier year

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Sir Philip Hartog, *Some Aspects of Indian Education Past and Present*, University of London Institute of Education, Studies and Reports, No. VII, 1939, p. 69.

covering the country as a whole. In their absence, Sir Philip Hartog has performed a public service by examining fully and fairly the authorities on which Mr. Gandhi based his computation or impression and showing how he had allowed himself to be misled.<sup>1</sup>

If the arithmetic of the proposition was far at fault, so also was its second or explanatory term, which represented the British administrators as starting the business of education with a clearance, blindly uprooting ancient institutions, friends to the soil, which had in them the principle of life and growth. As will be plain from the earlier sections of this narrative, our educational policy for a long period of tentative years was almost timidly conservative. It was not till more than fifty years after Britain had become dominant in India that the policy was adopted which has since prevailed, and then only after successive efforts had been made in vain to induce the existing systems to serve as instruments of progress. Even so, nothing was done to discourage, much less to root out, the institutions already in being or to force new courses upon them. As to village schools, their development may not have been very energetically pursued in the earlier years, but in those parts of the country in which the vernaculars received particular attention—in Bombay, for example, and the Upper Provinces—such action as was taken to foster popular education did nevertheless base itself on the extension and improvement of things as they were. And, as regards institutions of higher learning, notably the *tols* or priestly schools of the Hindus, which are still numerous, it is largely owing to the encouragement of government that they have been able to survive in such numbers and to improve themselves, in spite of the weakening response of the laity to the demands of the Brahmans for their maintenance. Nor were these ultra-conservative institutions animated by any principle of life and growth. They did indeed 'take hold of things as they were', but their function was, in the interests of caste and the priesthood, to keep them as they were. Any influence they may have had on liberal movements such as the education of the masses has not contributed to development. While they have served, and continue to serve, the public interest by helping to keep the social order steady in times of change and to preserve India's communications with the past, it would be difficult to point to any current contribution which they have made in the course of the century to progress or enlightenment.

But, if the British administrators did not root out things as they were, they did, with the decision to 'impart our superior lights',

<sup>1</sup> Sir Philip Hartog, *Some Aspects of Indian Education*, University of London Institute of Education, Studies and Reports, No. VII, 1939.



bring into the education of the country a new and revolutionary purpose, the purpose of preparing India to aline itself with western civilization and take its place in the modern world. And, ever since, despite inadequate means and a stubborn soil so 'matted with caste and custom' as almost to turn the coulter of the plough, they have steadily advanced that purpose, as well directly by educational means as indirectly by administrative measures creating conditions favourable to its farther and more rapid development. In assessing the results of our educational policy and effort, it is on this aspect that stress should be laid rather than on the figures of educational achievement, impressive as these undoubtedly are, or the still more impressive immensity of the task remaining to be accomplished.

Few people who have been actively engaged in educational work in India have not been faced by the objection of unlettered parents to sending their boys to school that our education spoils them for their father's occupation. The child of the artisan or labourer or husbandman who has completed the course of the village school, even if he has got no farther, has had his mind opened to a larger world. And he has seen boys of his own class and caste pass out with scholarships from the village school to the middle school, from the middle school to the high school, from the high school to the university, and so proceed to honourable and well-paid positions in society. His heart has passed from the village. He sees beyond it and is no longer at rest in the humble and laborious lot of his forebears. Under the Hindu system there was no such danger, no such opportunity. It ignored the natural aspiration of men to improve their condition and set itself against the admission of new ideas which might conflict with the truths announced by revelation in ancient times and unsettle the social order which had evolved therefrom. The condition men were born to, their caste, their status, was a life sentence from which there was no release. It was earned by action and inaction in previous lives and was not to be amended in this. The education which has supplanted this depressing system, or prevailed over it, is governed by the rule of hope. Democratic in its faith and inspiration, it seeks, however imperfect its success, to open the way for all alike to the place in the world of to-day which is appropriate to their natural aptitudes. The result is to be seen in a comparison of modern India, up and doing on its own behalf, moving in spirit with the times or stumbling ahead of them, with the India of a century ago in which, to quote a contemporary observer,<sup>1</sup> that very authority on whose sympathetic reports Mr. Gandhi based his condemnation of our

<sup>1</sup> Rev. W. Adam, *Third Report on the State of Education in Bengal and Bihar* (1838), p. 141.

policy. 'A long-continued acquiescence in old institutions and a long-continued subjection to absolute forms and principles of government had produced, and continued to perpetuate, an absolute torpor of the national mind.'

It is unfortunate that the advance of education, so inspired, should have outpaced the social and economic development of the country, thus confronting the new administrations on the threshold of their undertaking with a situation of danger and perplexity—a situation which is rendered not less but more stubborn in its difficulty by the fact that it has its roots in the soil and has developed naturally from the conditions which education has sought to amend. The explanation has lain mainly in caste—on the one hand, the breaking of their bonds by the lower classes, on the other, the conservatism of the upper, which has attached them to their traditional pursuits and privileges. At the risk of repetition, this may be further considered.

In all grades of educational institutions, from the village school to the post-graduate or professional college, we now find students responding to the call of opportunity from communities which had been from time immemorial outside the educational pale. On the enrolment of even the most advanced, the exterior or untouchable castes may be represented. The writer has in mind men of ability belonging to such castes who qualified for and were appointed to positions of authority. Ill at ease, unhappy in their official lives, carrying with them in their elevation the sense of degradation which was their inheritance—unforgettable either by themselves or by those with whom they had to work—they were yet examples to their own community, which held its head higher on their account and, ignoring their unhappiness, was encouraged by their success. So, all over India, unlettered parents belonging to traditionally unschooled communities have striven, and sacrificed, to maintain their boys at school and even to send them to college. In ever-increasing numbers they have joined the line of march. In ever-increasing numbers the leaders have found their way to the gates of the universities. It has been essentially a movement of escape, of escape from the curse that has lain upon them from generation to generation that they shall be despised as hewers of wood and drawers of water to all the congregation. In that freedom to which they aspire, the liberty with which they have had least concern has been the liberty to improve their lot in the state of life in which they were brought up. The son of a husbandman who has read in a high school will not willingly return to the plough however his father's acres may be enlarged. The potter would rather have his matriculate son exist in poverty as a clerk than in comfort as an artisan. Only those opportunities have been prized



which were formerly the monopoly of the higher orders, only that training has been valued which opened the way to such opportunities.

A brake might have been put on the pace of advance by requiring more exacting standards of staffing, accommodation, and equipment for schools, and of attainment for scholars. But, as we have seen, the endeavours of government to improve the quality of education have not been popular, and any strong effort in this direction involving a serious disturbance of the *status quo*—witness, for example, Lord Curzon's university reform—has been resented and opposed as interfering with liberty, increasing the cost of education, and placing obstacles in the way of political progress. The opposition has not been sectional but general. It is a sign of the new spirit in India, of the illumination of 'our superior lights', that the gospel of education has found its most influential advocates amongst the classes which suffer directly from the diffusion or loss of authority and increasing competition for the only sort of employment which they themselves desire or for which they have any aptitude. Patriotic and altruistic motives have outweighed prudential considerations.

Of late years, public attention has been increasingly concentrated on the growing disparity between the number of the educated classes and the opportunities of congenial and profitable employment which are open to them. So far, no remedy has been discovered, no palliative even; and no remedy is likely to be discovered except through time and tribulation unless the country can, without undue delay, compose itself under the new constitution and the provincial administrations find themselves in strength to take order with the community and deal with the issues more courageously and more radically than has been found possible in the past.

Had there been any solution at once practicable and acceptable, the situation would never have grown serious. For it has been under observation from foreseen beginnings, and efforts have been duly made by successive governments first to prevent it and then to keep it in hand. The effective co-operation of the public has been wanting to success. Not that the leaders of the various communities have not recognized the need for an extension of the field of middle-class employment or failed, in conference and in council, unceasingly to urge on government with this end in view the establishment of technical institutions, the encouragement of industrial enterprise; but the classes immediately concerned have been unwilling or unable to profit duly by the opportunities which have in response been freely afforded them.

The encroachment of class upon class, of the unprivileged upon

the privileged, is not a tale of one era only or one region of the earth. The age was grown so picked in Hamlet's Denmark, that the toe of the peasant came so near the heel of the courtier, he galled his kibe. Such encroachment there must be wherever in free lands there are class distinctions and privilege is an inheritance. But the situation in India has a character of its own. In no other country, no other which has avoided revolution, has the social order been so absolute in its exclusion of the mass of the people from the dignities and higher opportunities of life. The upward movement has accordingly been more extensive in India than elsewhere, more irresistible in its impulse. And it has been confined to a much narrower channel. Early marriage, the joint-family system, the assurance of the necessities of life without the need for exertion, the divorce from commerce and industry have tended to discourage initiative and enterprise in the higher castes and to disqualify them from taking the varied part in a changing world which would at once have profited them, given the lower castes by their example a wider field of aspiration and endeavour, and led to the more rapid development of the resources of the country.

Political and economic influences now at work are undoubtedly weakening the force of caste inhibitions and modifying the social order. As it grows increasingly difficult to live without earning, members of the higher castes are venturing more and more freely into unaccustomed fields of endeavour. But the change proceeds slowly, and the step which, more than any other, would lead to an acceleration has still to be made. It remains to effect a reconciliation between learning and labour, to have it brought home to all and accepted by all that no serviceable work is a dishonour and that neither birth nor learning can of itself suffice to exempt from toil.

Much has been made of the use of English as the medium of instruction in the advanced stages of education. It has hampered the students, led to mere parrot-learning, and so forth. There may be something in this: there is not much. For centuries prior to the time of English rule, higher education in India was conducted in languages other than the spoken languages of the people, and in all schools, elementary or advanced, recitation was the first and the main mode of learning. In the vernacular schools, the preceptors taught by rote what they had learned by rote. In the Sanskrit schools, study by rote has carried on from the times when the *Vedas* were handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. In the Arabic schools also, rote was the rule; it is common to meet Muslims who can recite large tracts of the Koran without knowledge of the language in which it is written. In the English schools and colleges, the 'maleficent spirit of Cram'—to



revert to Lord Curzon—is not more but less in evidence than it was, and still is, in the indigenous schools, being discouraged by the methods of instruction, and by the number and variety of the text-books and their lack of any pretensions to special authority or verbal inspiration.

There is of course a difficulty, a serious difficulty, in learning through a medium other than the mother tongue. But it is a difficulty which the Indian, whose intellectual equipment qualifies him to make the least of it, has shared with other races whom it has not held back—the Jews, for example, or, to give homelier instances, the Welsh or the Scottish Gaels. If an educational explanation has to be found for the economic shiftlessness of the educated Indian who has not been placed in black-coated employment, it must be looked for elsewhere. The ruling fact seems to be not, as is commonly supposed, that his education has been too much concerned with words, too little with realities, that it has been preponderantly literary or cultural, but that it has been, from his point of view, essentially vocational, undertaken as a preparation for that class of employment for which a knowledge of English is necessary, and that it has led to a change of habit and outlook which have alienated him from the simple way of life followed by the mass of his fellow countrymen.

The responsibility carries beyond educational policy. On the one hand, as has been brought out, it rests on caste; on the other, it carries back to the decision to use English as the language of administration, or, to go a little farther, to the unavoidable decision to lead India to adopt the standards of the West. This decision once taken, there was nothing for it but to offer education in English. The enthusiasm of the people has done the rest, ensuring that whatever study might be neglected, the study of English should not. If and in so far as the fullest use has not been made of the vernaculars, this has not been due to the policy of government but to the public preference for English. Local self-governing bodies, for example, have constantly had to be restrained from diverting to English schools funds intended for education in the vernacular; it was only by unpopular interposition of authority that English could be excluded from primary schools; and in those papers in the matriculation examination which could be answered either in English or in the vernacular at the option of the candidate, the choice was ordinarily in favour of English.

Of late years, with the growth of national self-consciousness and national pride, there has been a reaction against English, a tendency to advance the use of the leading vernaculars. The prospect has even come into view of the ultimate replacement of English by a single Indian tongue which might be popularized as the general

medium of higher education and the language of interprovincial and interracial intercourse. For the present, this is little more than a dream, and it may fade and be forgotten. But the preferment of the main vernaculars in their proper areas is not a dream but a matter of affairs. In a number of the provinces the experiment has for some years been in progress of replacing English by the vernacular in the concluding stages of the high school course. In this way, it was held, students would learn their general subjects more easily and more thoroughly and would bring better-trained intelligences to the special study of English. Such reports as have been published up to date are not altogether satisfactory. If general learning has improved, the improvement is not so marked as to be beyond question, and English has suffered. The reasons are various—lack of suitable literature, insufficiency of well-qualified teachers, the multiplicity of vernaculars. The difficulties will no doubt be overcome. While English must still be allowed where pupils of many races are gathered together, the use of the vernacular will ultimately prevail throughout the school course in the larger unilingual areas. It will be the concern of educational authorities in these areas to do what they can to ensure that the change does not react unfavourably on the study of English, which must continue for some time at least to be the language of the universities. For some time! It may be for long. The very name of India is English—the country has no other name. It is English which has awakened India. It is England which has unified her infinite variety of caste, religion, race, language, and civilization. It is to an English order that the companies have assembled, to an English rhythm that they have moved out upon the road. If India is left free to pursue her national development, it may be that she may never give less than a dominant place in her culture to the language which has brought her so far and so hopefully on the way to strength and independence, and that English may be her imperial language at noon as it has been in the darkness and the dawn.

The education of India has now been handed over as a going concern. The apprentice has become master. The succession is to a task which has been well begun, well set on its way. Initial difficulties of all sorts have been lessened or overcome. Conditions are favourable to advance. The country has been opened up. The standard of living has risen. Prosperity has increased. Improved communications, improved facilities of transport have helped the educational influence of schools and colleges to enlarge the village experience and the village mind and to abate the repressions and restraints of caste. A healthful discontent is abroad which makes for progress. The enfranchisement of the people, with the power,



however imperfectly apprehended, which it confers, has stimulated the demand for education.

But there is another side to the picture. India is poor by western standards. The action of the State must still be clogged by the condition of the public finances. The principles on which development has proceeded in the past will require adjustment in consideration of the larger scope of action which is now in view. The mere measure of the task is frightening, and it is beset with an involution of problems, requiring for their solution time and patience, enlightened leaders, and public trust. A century ago the first task was the education of the classes. Now, if there can be any ranking amongst claims which are mutually dependent and of which none can be neglected, the first task is the education of the masses. A century ago the education of women had not come into view. Now it is in the forefront of attention and, although only two to three in a hundred of the female population were literate at the last census, and only two in a thousand literate in English, already there is difficulty in certain areas in finding work for the educated few which social conditions will allow them to undertake. As important as the extension of education is the need to improve it at its source, to reform the universities and, with them, the high schools; not only to reform them but to develop them so that facilities for higher education may not be wanting for the increased numbers who will come forward for enrolment as literacy is spread in wider commonalty amongst the illiterate and the depressed; not only to extend and improve the facilities for higher education, but to diversify them, to change the public outlook on industry and labour, and so to elaborate the national economy that there may no longer be a bond between education and disappointment, and the country's youth emerging from its schools and colleges may be received in a world which is ready to welcome them and to profit by their training and their abilities.

## CHAPTER V

### THE PRESS

ALTHOUGH India had no Press, in the proper sense of the word, until the last quarter of the eighteenth century, it has had throughout the ages its own means of communicating news and giving publicity to ideas, from the pillars and rock inscriptions of Asoka, promulgating imperial edicts and even a moral code, down to the humbler pictorial art of Kalighat, which until the other day provided illiterate visitors to that temple with little farthing pictures, which were done in a minute with a brush and ink or colour by pliers of the trade outside its gates, and told in a few bold and often humorous strokes news or scandal or ideas of the day that gathered round the temple. Written newspapers of a kind were in circulation in the days of the Mughal empire. We know that the common soldiers of Aurangzeb's army were supplied with papers of this kind, whose writers were permitted great liberty in the way they presented their news. In every provincial capital the Mughal emperors maintained a bureau of intelligence, with a *teaquia-navis*, who prepared a kind of gazette containing an account of public transactions, and a *sawanih-navis*, who compiled a general news-sheet relating both the events of the day and the rumours which were current. These were official chronicles, which were transmitted to Delhi, where a digest was prepared for the emperor, so that he might be informed of all that transpired throughout the empire. There were also private news-letters, written by news-agents employed by merchants and others, which had a certain circulation. All were in manuscript, printing being an art unknown in India.

From these early conditions to the Press as now understood is a long journey that it would be unprofitable here to describe in detail. India to-day has between 3,000 and 4,000 printed newspapers and periodicals published from a variety of centres in seventeen different languages, a few bilingual. They and their forebears and first exemplars have between them a history of a century and a half, and they show one consequence of the impact of the ways and ideas of the British on India. The Press in India is, so to say, an intruder that has insisted on making its contribution to the pattern formed by the relation of the East India Company, Parliament, people of Britain, and peoples of India; by the interactions of thought and habit; by the natural difference of view in official and non-official, in Briton and Indian.

In the Company's eyes the Press was generally a nuisance that



might well be a danger. Its story cannot be understood unless it is constantly remembered that the Company and its servants generally regarded India as a personal and private possession, in which those not directly serving the Company under its own orders were interlopers and trespassers, whom it was proper to remove if they gave signs of being troublesome. Nor when the Press began its life in India was the newspaper man much more appreciated in England. Politics, for all that was unseemly in it, was regarded as an honourable interest. Hardly so the journalism that grew up in connexion with politics. A few papers towered splendidly above a crowd of smaller things, *The Times*, *Morning Chronicle*, *Morning Post*, *Courier*, *Morning Herald*. By 1815 *The Times* had a circulation of 5,000, the *Courier* at times of 10,000. Weeklies too commanded respect, for instance Cobbett's *Political Register* and Leigh Hunt's *Examiner*. Journals of this class could afford a high standard both of journalistic virtue and of journalistic competence. Even so, *The Times* in 1795 supported government in return for a pension of £600. Many of the smaller journals were worthless rags, venal, making the most of their nuisance value. What then was to be expected in India, where the journalist was often a needy European adventurer, without capital or social status or official standing? An interloper, looked on askance by the authorities, appreciated by his fellow non-officials only to the extent that he amused them by his pertness or scurrility, he knew that his career might be a short one and saw no reason why it should not be also merry. If he was only a stick to beat government with, which is how he himself, the government in India, the Court of Directors, and the British community in India regarded the journalist, he did not see why he should not beat lustily.

In a history of the Grand Lodge of England can be found an interesting reference to a brother who for some years filled high offices and then dropped out of things. Across his name in one of the registers someone wrote the sad explanation, that this brother afterwards fell into indigent circumstances and sank so low as to become editor of a newspaper. Some years later the English Bar in a strong fit of respectability tried to keep out of its ranks anyone who had ever written for a newspaper. Early in the nineteenth century Sir Walter Scott refused for his son-in-law, as unworthy of his social position, the editorship of a leading London paper. Therefore we need not be surprised if governors-general and their lieutenants had dislike and contempt for newspaper men, nor if the journalist relieved his feelings by annoying those who were acutely conscious of the importance of their position and of the need for defending their dignity. Warren Hastings persistently attacked a little Calcutta paper, the first in India, and ultimately strangled it.

Wellesley would tolerate no Press criticisms of his acts. When away from Calcutta he wrote to Sir Alured Clerk: 'I shall take an early opportunity of transmitting rules for the conduct of the whole tribe of editors; in the meantime if you cannot tranquillize the editors of this and other publications, be so good as to suppress their papers by force and send their persons to Europe.' This attitude long prevailed, and in large measure deservedly. Audacity in India has often gone far over the line drawn by discretion and prescribed by considerations of safety. Even so calm a critic as Sir Henry Maine was moved in 1868 to write of the European Press in Bengal and Upper India that: 'We always knew that it was careless, shallow, and scandalous. We now know all but for certain that it is corrupt.' The equally contemplative historian Sir William Hunter observed of the Calcutta Press generally that 'scurrility and servility seemed the only two notes known to it'. Yet, as in England, so in India, the Press steadily grew in strength, as it grew in a sense of responsibility, though it often carried with it weaker members who never mastered the better points of journalism. Let it be admitted that mountains were often made of mole-hills. India's safety was not threatened when Mr. James Silk Buckingham, sailor, traveller, editor, afterwards M.P., smiled at secretaries to government who had devised a green uniform for stately occasions and dubbed them 'the gangrene of Bengal'. But comments of that sort often provoked crises.

From all this it may be understood that the early history of the Press in India shows a perpetual tug between the two principles, freedom and control. Was the Press to be a function or at least an adjunct of government, helping the Company in a difficult and delicate task? Or was it to do as it pleased, even adversely criticize or laugh at government, in a country where it would be peculiarly dangerous if the people, and especially the army, were disturbed out of obedience? An alien government, situated as the Company's was, could never forget that danger. Yet even inside the Company were men, some in high position, who favoured a considerable measure of freedom for the Press; might it not be invaluable, since the Company needed the good opinion of an alien people and had few ways of getting to know what it wanted? The time, the circumstances, and the men determined which view prevailed at any time, whether government should decide what newspapers might publish or editors might be trusted to impose their own restraints. The Government of India's sensitiveness may seem excessive to those who reflect what the early conditions were. People and army were little likely to be disturbed by comments in English papers (for some decades there were no others), which only a handful of Indians in the large towns could read, and whose



circulation was painfully small in that age of poor communications. About the middle of the nineteenth century the famous *Friend of India* interested itself to find out something about circulation figures, at a time when India was advanced in knowledge of English, and even in capacity to use its own languages, by comparison with the days of the early governors-general. Its finding was that eight Bengali newspapers of Calcutta between them had not 1,300 subscribers; that the interior of the country took less than 200 copies; that in January 1837 only 151 copies were sent by post out of Calcutta, and 195 in a month in 1843; that all the English papers of Calcutta, with an aggregate circulation of nearly 4,000, had between them only 125 Indian subscribers. In the opinion of the writer of this article (written in 1843, published in 1851) a newspaper was not reckoned among the wants of the people, and was the first expense an Indian lopped off when embarrassments arrived. An Indian contemporary disagreed. More progress, it thought, had been made in the past seven years than in the previous twenty-six; educated Indians were beginning to want a newspaper; there were fifty vernacular presses in Bengal, town and country, printing periodical journals and books; and whereas one solitary Indian was publishing an English paper in Calcutta, twenty-one vernacular periodicals were appearing there.

'Notwithstanding all the attractions of a foreign tongue the Bengali language is still the most powerful source of mental influence in Bengal, and it is a very poor argument against the use of it for communicating sound and valuable knowledge to the masses that it is not yet fitted to represent the lofty conceptions of Milton and Shakespeare.'

From all this it may be inferred that newspapers were little read by Indians in those early years. The Company's fears were based on the ease with which information, and especially anything alarming in itself or reflecting on the wisdom of the authorities, spreads through the land.

It may be serviceable here to give, without overburden of detail, a summary of the conflict between the policies of control and freedom, which is of special relevance to this study as it shows how the English idea of the freedom of the Press became implanted in a country which had no previous conception of it, how within a few years leaders of Indian thought ranged themselves in its support, and how, on the other hand, the government long opposed it on the ground that freedom was incompatible with Indian conditions and incapable of adjustment to them.

India saw its first editor and paper in 1780, in Calcutta, where non-officials laughed at its antics and the annoyance it caused Warren Hastings. Some interesting pages about Hicky's journalism

may be read in Busteed's *Echoes of Old Calcutta*. From 1790 newspapers grew in numbers, and gave much offence; editors of one sort and another emerged, some probably deserving Windham's description of reporters who dealt with debates in Parliament as 'bankrupts, lottery-office keepers, footmen and decayed tradesmen', and the similar words of those who in 1801 proposed to set up a government newspaper in Calcutta that would 'put out of existence and needy indolence a few European adventurers who were found unfit to engage in any creditable method of subsistence'. But for this official project the money could not be found.

Before the century was out the blow fell on Duane, a sturdy Irish-American who was obtuse to hints from high quarters. One of his offences was a reflection on a French officer who represented his government and nation in Calcutta. Arrested, Duane applied for a writ of habeas corpus, but at the hearing the court unanimously decided that the Governor-General in Council had the legal right to arrest and send him to Europe. On the generous intercession of the French Agent, M. Funeron, the order of deportation was cancelled. Duane, however, was neither to be taught nor to be intimidated. For other articles that gave offence, especially inflammatory addresses to soldiers, he was arrested and deported in 1794, the Court of Directors approving. The story goes that he was invited to Government House, where he expected breakfast, but found a number of soldiers who took him to the Fort, where he was detained until he could be put on an Indiaman for London.

Of Wellesley's stern views about the 'tribe of editors' something has been said. He gave effect to them without delay. In 1799 the government in Bengal called on every printer of a newspaper to put his name at the bottom of the paper and on every editor and proprietor to declare his name and address to the secretary to government; nothing was to be published that had not been examined and approved by the secretary to government or someone authorized by him; the penalty for breach of any of these regulations was immediate deportation to Europe.

So India saw its Press, then an entirely English Press of which Indians were hardly aware, first brought under control by enactment. Pearce, Wellesley's biographer, says (*Memoirs*, vol. i, p. 286) that these regulations varied in no material particular from the ordinances promulgated by the Star Chamber in 1585; and Charles MacLean, who was one of their victims, denounced them as 'the *ne plus ultra* of human despotism'. There was nothing editors could do about it; not even any public opinion to support and encourage them when they deserved it, for they were small people of no account, seldom enjoying powerful friendships. Minto also was harsh, and for nearly twenty years the fates were



against them. Respite came with Hastings, who by 1818 had arrived at another point of view. His regulations virtually cancelled control; editors were now placed under some general regulations preventive of the discussion of dangerous topics. Also he permitted newspapers to circulate at reduced prices, an advantage rather potential than real, for circulations were small and outside a few large towns hardly existed. Though more deportations were to come, it was already being considered whether editors were not secured against this danger by circumstances. For deportation was in essence refusal to allow an Englishman to reside in the Company's territories, but among editors were now Europeans, Anglo-Indians, and Indians whose homes were in India.

Hastings put his view with courage. To speak of government in India as resting on opinion was heresy in India in 1818, and he must have startled many when he told a Madras audience that 'if the motives of our action are worthy it must be more [*sic*] to render them intelligible throughout an empire our hold on which is opinion'. Not everyone subscribes to that view to-day. He defended his policy towards the Press 'not on the ground of the natural right of my fellow subjects but of a positive and well-weighed policy'. In his opinion the criticism of a government conscious of rectitude took away nothing of its strength, but on the contrary gave it an incalculable addition of force. 'A government which has nothing to disguise wields the most powerful instrument that can appertain to sovereign rule.' The Press, as he saw it, was small, disorganized, poor, badly supported by the public, with no worthy traditions; yet groping its way to better things, finding in itself the courage and resources necessary in pioneers, and by no means lacking in the view that independence is a condition essential if journalism is to serve a country.

Hastings took the generous view. None the less governments found it impossible to work with the Press in a wholly amicable manner. In the next few years there were threats, censures, warnings. In the story of this period James Silk Buckingham stands out. From ship's captain he became editor, in charge of the *Calcutta Journal* from late 1818 to early 1823, when government finally lost patience and deported him. Some months before that the government had asked the Directors for more power to control the Press. Hastings left India in January 1823. Mr. Adam, acting Governor-General, did not believe in his generous attitude towards newspapers, and one of his first acts was to deal with Buckingham, whose final and unforgivable offence was one that not many would condemn to-day. When a Doctor of Divinity who was at once First Minister of the Scottish Church in Calcutta and owner-editor of a Calcutta journal managed to gather in also the post of

clerk in charge of the Company's stationery, Buckingham regarded the arrangement as unbecoming the character of a Minister of the Gospel. This reflection on the government's wisdom was too much; because of his 'disrespectful expressions' he was ordered to England, where he received a pension of £200 a year from the Company in compensation for his treatment. This was not the last occasion on which authority was ridiculous in its sensitiveness. When Buckingham was deported, his printer named Rozario was thrown out of work. To get together a few rupees a month he started a one-sheet paper, called at first the *Columbian Press* and later the *Bengal Chronicle*. Something in it annoyed the government, which with bell, book, and candle warned him. Again he offended, again he was ceremoniously warned. Imagine the emotions of a government of 1826 that read in the next issue the demure observation, 'Twice the brindled cat hath mewed'. This time his paper was marked down for destruction, but Sutherland, a man well known in Calcutta, avowed himself the editor of the sheet, suffered himself to be dismissed by Rozario, and so saved the paper. Whether he was editor or only a ghost editor the record does not tell. But the ghost or jail editor has been a feature of Indian journalism, the man who can go to jail without this affecting the paper's welfare. The complaints are numerous in official papers that when those responsible for offence were tracked down, it might be found that editor, printer, owners, were youths in their twenties or even their teens; sometimes they were found to be still at school or college.

In general the story of the growth of the Press in India centres on Calcutta as the seat of government, the chief business place, and a town of quick-witted Indians prompt to learn through their contact with Europeans. Poor as were the communications of the time, what was thought and felt in Calcutta soon influenced other centres. This is not to say that other centres did not contribute to the story. Several English papers had been started in Bombay, but in 1822 only two, the *Bombay Courier* and the *Bombay Gazette*, were extant. Reviewing the progress of the Press in the next year J. H. Stocqueler, who was long connected with it, said that he found that of Bengal weakened by commercial failures and government persecution, that of Bombay in a childish condition. 'The Bombay papers were 'very comical things', composed almost entirely of selections from English papers and occasional law reports. The pens of editors seldom found nobler occupation than the record of a ball or supper or laudations of amateur theatricals. He himself started in 1827 a paper, called the *Iris* because it was intended to have as many hues as the rainbow, but he soon found that politics did not pay. 'I did my best', he said, 'to invite sedition



and encourage discontent but all to no purpose.<sup>1</sup> Government was too strong and people knew on which side their bread was buttered. His paper struggled on and was only saved from collapse by a controversy about the Parsi calendar, which aroused a real interest denied to more general matters. He remained long enough to see the Press, in his own words, reach a healthy maturity and become literally the organ of public sentiment and a useful auxiliary of the government. The raising of its tone was chiefly due to the *Bombay Times* (now the *Times of India*), which was established in 1838 with the declared object, *inter alia*, of devoting itself to the interests of the public and discussing the views and policy of the government. Its contemporaries were far below its standard and tried to outdo one another in abuse of it. A reference to 'the spirit of a jackass that dwells in our flunkey contemporary' is the authentic language of the *Eatonswill Gazette* and the *Eatonswill Independent*. It is no wonder that Robert Knight, who became its editor in 1850, said that the ruffianism of the Bombay Press for several years was unprecedented.<sup>2</sup>

The exposition of the view on which all regulation of the Press in India has been based calls for some attention here. Sir Thomas Munro of Madras gave vigorous and lucid expression to it on 12 April 1822, in a minute that is justly famous.<sup>3</sup> A free Press, he argued, implied a free people; the Press could act through the people only when the majority of them had already imbibed the spirit of freedom. Owing to the unnatural state in which India was placed under a foreign government and with a native army, a free Press might evoke a spirit of independence in the army long before it was even thought of by the people at large. The progress of India demanded especially the prolonged sovereignty of British rule and the political improvement of the people to the point of being able to maintain a free or at least a regular system of government among themselves. If the Press were free and unrestricted these two desiderata would not be possible. As he interpreted the situation of the moment, the restrictions on the Press were only on comments about the character of government and its affairs, and on the religion of the people; were these removed none would benefit but the owners of the newspapers and the government's difficulties would be increased. The peculiar position of an alien government in India could not be ignored, nor the danger of

<sup>1</sup> Personalities of the kind familiar to old English journalism long continued in India. One Viceroy was said to have the manners of an Italian organ-grinder with the intelligence of his monkey. Of a later Viceroy it was asked whether he learnt his manners in Teheran or St. Petersburg.

<sup>2</sup> See the edition of his Minutes by Arbuthnot, and the official papers relating to the Press in India printed for Parliament (which are put together in Collection No. 72, Native Press Parliamentary Papers from 1831, in the India Office Library).

circulating matter that might agitate the troops. The whole minute deserves study not as a comment on the Press only, but for the light it throws on the manner in which the problem of governing India was then viewed. Munro was by no means a 'sun-dried' or 'hide-bound bureaucrat', to use terms common to-day; on the contrary, he was advanced in his views and had as high an opinion of the potentialities of India as he had of the qualities of his own race and its ideals and institutions. A man of his stamp did not arrive at or hold lightly the ideas he set out in his minute. It cannot be too often repeated that the fear of excitement and disturbance in the Indian army was ever in the minds of the Company and those who in India administered its charge.

At the same time the freedom of the Press was a topic much debated in India and in England by men who knew India. It was discussed in Parliament and its committees, and argued about in books. Dundas as President of the Board of Control told Parliament in 1811 that 'no doubt the very government would be shaken to its foundations if unlicensed publications were allowed to circulate over the continent of Hindustan'. The curious will find the exertion rewarded if they turn over the pages of the Papers relating to the Public Press in India referred to above. Of the books written as contributions to the discussion two are selected for notice here. The first is *A Sketch of the history and influence of the Press in British India; containing remarks on the effects of a Free Press on subsidiary alliances, on the delays of office, on superstition, on the administration of justice, on flogging and on agriculture. Also on the dangers of a Free Press and the licentiousness of a censorship.* By Leicester Stanhope, London, 1823. The author was a soldier,<sup>1</sup> with views that it must be supposed often annoyed the mess. His argument was, in brief, that the diffusion of knowledge through the medium of education and a free Press must rapidly improve the condition of society in India and in the surrounding world. The Calcutta Press was still under severe restraint, but it had indulged in a latitude of discussion unknown except in England, America, and Switzerland. The book refers to English and Bengali newspapers (vernacular journalism was only just showing its nose), and especially to a 'Brahmanical magazine' that in the last few years had published hundreds of works on theology, law, logic, grammar, astronomy, written by Bengalis, and it accuses the editor of one Bengali newspaper (the famous Serampore missionary J. C. Marshman) of closing his eyes to anything that did the smallest credit to the

<sup>1</sup> He had been created C.B. for his services in the Maratha War of 1817-18 and went on half-pay in 1823 with the rank of lieutenant-colonel. Among other causes which he championed later were those of Greek independence, Polish independence, and prohibition. He succeeded his brother as Earl of Harrington in 1831.



natives. At Bombay 'almost the first act of the present Governor's administration was to abolish the base censorship, the action of a lofty Englishman'. The Government of Madras on the contrary trusted to Mr. Censor Wood, a *magnus Apollo*, as censor of heretical pravity; he it was who prevented the printing in Tamil of the prayer book of Christian Unitarians. An eastern proverb is quoted, that 'the monarchs of Asia were more afraid of the pen of Abul Fazl than of the sword of Akbar', which may be matched by the Napoleonic estimate that a hostile newspaper on the Rhine was worth some battalions of soldiers to the side it took. The argument against a free Press was always of the type 'Would you trust a child with a lighted candle in a powder magazine?'

The other work selected for special reference here is called *Letters to Mr. Hastings on the Indian Press with an appeal to reason and the British Parliament on the Liberty of the Press in General*. By a Friend to Good Government. 'Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri' (Horace). London, 1824. The author was Captain Francis Homes. This book argues, in a spirit like the former's, that a free Press is the best protection against sedition and revolution; that restraint breeds secret political sectaries, revolt, insurrection; that it is the intrinsic character of a free Press to be favourable to justice, truth, order; that it is the truest friend of good government; that a free Press is particularly necessary to India, since its government has great discretionary powers and is far away, so that Indians have no other way of telling it their grievances; that a free Press is a medium best calculated to realize the views of the British Parliament and make it consonant with the wants and wishes of the people. It is nonsense that a free Press is a trumpet of sedition. 'The East India Company cannot inspire its subjects with any great respect for its magnanimity when in the plenitude of its power it fears mere paper shot.'

The reprinting of Stanhope's brochure in its columns, after Buckingham's departure, was the last nail in the coffin of the *Calcutta Journal*. It was suppressed and an assistant editor, Sandford Arnot (later Ram Mohan Ray's secretary in England) was deported. The government was now armed with new powers by a rigorous Press ordinance. Proprietors and editors were required to take out licences; they could publish only what they were permitted to by government. This triumph of 'the old Toryism', which appeared in the government *Gazette* of 20 March 1823, was by constitutional practice put before the Supreme Court of Calcutta on 15 March 1823 by the Standing Counsel to the East India Company, to be registered when it had been publicly read.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No regulation was valid within a Presidency town at this time until it had been registered at the Supreme Court.

With this reference to the court begins a new chapter in the history of the Press in India. Indians were now interested in journalism, as well as politics;<sup>1</sup> one or two papers in Indian languages were in existence; and Ram Mohan Ray and a few other high-minded and courageous Bengalis saw in the regulation a piece of folly that would impede the enlightenment of the country. These acted, and so began what was really a new phase in India's constitutional history. For the petition they drafted and submitted to the Court, the remonstrance which Miss Sophia Collet has called the *Areopagitica* of Indian history, was, in the words of Mr. R. C. Dutt, the start of 'that system of constitutional agitation for political rights which their countrymen have learned to value so much in the present day'. A Round Table Conference in London to discuss India's future, with Indians taking a full share in the discussions, would have been a preposterous and incredible suggestion to Englishmen of the Company's days. It might never have come about had the great Ram Mohan Ray not taken the lead, and three Tagores, a Ghose, and a Banerji, not joined with him in starting the process that led to it.

Ram Mohan himself, who, though not a lawyer, had brilliant powers of understanding and expounding legal matters, drafted the petition, which the other five also signed; Chandra Kumar Tagore, Dwarkanath Tagore, Harchandra Ghose, Gauri Charan Banerji, Prasanna Kumar Tagore; all men remembered by Indians as brave patriots who dared to stand up to Company, government, and court, not on behalf of any peculiarly Indian rights, but on behalf of what they and their admirers regarded as a natural right of all men, the free access to knowledge and opinion without the intervention of any authority to say what was good for them, what not. The whole memorial shows how they had become imbued with English political principles and ways of thought. Declaring that they and their countrymen had been secured in the enjoyment of the same civil and religious privileges that every Briton was entitled to in England, they boldly asserted that the ordinance would be a sudden deprivation of one of the most precious of their rights, a right, moreover, which they had not, and could not be charged with having, ever abused. It would preclude them from communicating to the Sovereign and his Council in England the real condition of his faithful subjects in India and the treatment

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Heber, a detached spectator, wrote to the Dean of St. Asaph in January 1824 expressing the opinion that on the whole he thought it desirable that in India newspapers should be licensed by government, but added that he did not think this licensing system could be long continued because of the increased interest both Hindus and Muslims took in politics and the evident fermentation which either for good or evil was going on in the public mind. *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India* (1849), vol. II, p. 201.



they experienced from the local government. It would also endanger national education by putting a stop to the diffusion of knowledge either by translations from the learned languages of the East or by the circulation of literary intelligence drawn from foreign publications. And there was an added objection based on considerations of a peculiarly Indian character.

'Those natives who are in more favourable circumstances and of respectable character have such an invincible prejudice against making a voluntary affidavit or undergoing the solemnities of an oath, that they will never think of establishing a publication which can only be supported by a series of oaths and affidavits, abhorrent to their feelings and derogatory to their reputation among their countrymen.'

Indian Calcutta, that had been little interested in the Press, and for many years afterwards found it no hardship to do without newspapers, was greatly excited by this act of daring, and thought of these men much as English people once thought of the Seven Bishops. Would the bold six be put in prison for their impudence in challenging the wisdom of authorities who had in their hands, in addition to the ordinary instruments of administration, Regulation III of 1818, under which executive decision alone, without cause assigned or argument heard, could put a man in jail? The petition was rejected by the court, the sole acting judge, Sir Francis Macnaghten, at whose suggestion it had been drafted, explaining that before the ordinance was entered or its merits argued, he had pledged his word to government to give it his sanction. Even justice can get drowsy and nod at times in India's climate. A memorial was then presented to the Privy Council, which also rejected it. The six had failed. But they had won a fame that will ever cling to their names in their own country. It should be made clear, before we go on to examine the beginnings of the vernacular Press, that is, the newspapers published in Indian languages, that their effort was not made on behalf of those papers especially. Indian papers were few and insignificant, nor was there in them any assurance of vigorous life to come. Their brave championship was of the Press in its entirety, as an instrument that could become of inestimable value in a land where the people in general were ignorant of what was going on in the world and where the relation between government and people was peculiar. Ram Mohan himself, points out one Indian writer of to-day, did foresee that 'the cat-callings of bugle-boys, practising their 'prentice windpipes in some out-of-the-way angle of the ramparts, were destined to grow into clear trumpet notes which should arouse sleeping camps to great constitutional struggles and sound the charge of political parties in battle'. But he and his associates were contending for a general right of humanity at large.

At this point notice is due of the beginning of India's vernacular Press, the journals in Indian languages. Ram Mohan Ray is the great name, and he was in a large measure the creator of this Press. Before him, however, there was a small beginning. Marshman the missionary, one of Serampore's great three, was in the field before him. On Marshman's request, government in February 1818 allowed a Bengali periodical to appear provided that political intelligence, especially eastern, was excluded and it concerned itself rather with general information and new discoveries; a small space, it was conceded, might be allotted to local events so as to render it attractive to readers. This was the *Digdarshan*, a monthly publication, which won such immediate popularity that a regular weekly<sup>1</sup> was thought of. This took form in the *Samachar Darpan* (Mirror of News) on 23 May 1818, with Marshman as editor. Its establishment was enthusiastically encouraged by Hastings, who allowed it to circulate through the post at a quarter the usual rates, and also encouraged a Persian edition by a liberal subscription. The *Samachar*, which contained both Indian and foreign news, had a fairly long life, as newspaper lives have gone in India. In 1829 it became bilingual, English columns running parallel to their Bengali versions. At the end of 1841 it temporarily disappeared when Marshman was appointed editor of the weekly *Government Gazette*; in 1842 it was revived by Bhagti Charan Chatterji, in whose hands it soon drooped or died; in 1851 the Mission revived it for the second time but it faded out after some eighteen months. In general the *Samachar* is thought of as the first Bengali (and Indian) newspaper, though mention can be found of a *Bengal Gazette* published in 1816 that was feeble from birth and died in less than a year. Bombay's first Indian paper was the *Bombay Samachar*, a weekly that made its bow on 1 July 1822 and found in the Bombay government a subscriber for fifty copies. It became a daily in 1860. From these small beginnings grew an Indian Press that by 1875 had 254 papers in a number of languages, engaged, many of them, not only in giving and commenting on current news but also in supplying to the country instruction about itself and its potentialities in a larger manner.

From the first it has been a characteristic of the Indian Press that it has felt it a duty to be an instructor in the fullest sense. The English Press in India, as we have seen, was associated in its infancy with flippancy; dependent on the non-official business community, it made it its chief purpose to amuse them and to please them by annoying the government. That, we have shown,

<sup>1</sup> It was not till this year that there was a daily newspaper even in English. This was the *Bengal Harkaru*, which was eventually absorbed in the *Indian Daily News*.



was part of the reason why government's hand was so often against it. Instruction in any serious sense its readers neither expected nor desired. In those early days Indian society was not educated to English journalism, while English society in the few large centres where it was to be found was too occupied otherwise to have time or mind for serious writing. For that reason journalism was little regarded and there was no public opinion about it. When editors and governments fell out, as they often did, the general public looked on as at a spectacle arranged for its entertainment, whereas from the first the Indian Press, despite much weakness, had larger views and ambitions. That it began with men like Marshman, representing the outlook of the Serampore Mission, and, especially, Ram Mohan Ray, has been an important fact in its development; it has in consequence regarded itself as in the highest and fullest sense an educator of the country. For it has to be remembered that when these first Indian newspapers appeared there was little organized education of the modern kind in the land; few schools of any importance, no universities to stimulate higher studies and keep India in touch with what was being done in other countries. English literature, western institutions, European science were blessings about which India knew little and yearned to know much. Therefore newspapers had to shoulder a responsibility peculiar to the conditions; if they were not always equal to it, they were nevertheless justified and stimulated in their efforts by the lack in India of any other kind of instructor for the people at large.

India, therefore, has reason to be grateful that Ram Mohan Ray interested himself in journalism. What he did for the Press he did as part of his general interest in serving his country, his generation, and posterity. Linguist, philosopher, religious reformer, fighter against social abuses, writer, educationist, he more than anyone in modern India saw life as a whole and was sensitive to the weaknesses that call for remedy. In the recent words of a Bengali writer, he it was who 'laid the foundation of all the principal modern movements for the elevation of our people'. Fortunate was the Indian Press that he gave it at its inception the impress of his fine nature.

Three and a half years after the Serampore vernacular paper, in December 1821, there appeared in Calcutta the *Sambad Kaumudi* or 'Moon of Intelligence', a weekly published every Tuesday morning. Its object, the first number announced, was 'public good'. The subjects to be discussed will, therefore, have that object as a *guiding star* and any essay bearing upon the primary object will always meet with ready attention'. Ram Mohan was both principal promoter and virtual editor, and often wrote in it. On its staff was Bhawani Charan Banerji, who left on conscientious

grounds after the thirteenth issue, to set up a rival opposed to Ram Mohan's agitation for the abolition of suttee or the burning of widows on their husbands' pyres. The *Sambad Kaumudi* was practically the first Bengali paper edited and conducted by Bengalis; the first of all, the *Bengal Gazette* of 1816, was apparently a small one-man paper that died too soon to be remembered as a pioneer. Many of the *Sambad's* subscribers fell away when a rival, the *Samachar Chandrika*, appeared, its founder 'luring them away by an artifice'. What the artifice was seems not to be on record. In consequence the *Sambad* had to close down in September 1822, to be revived in April 1823 under Ananda Chandra Mukharji and become a bi-weekly in 1830. The rival *Samachar Chandrika* became the organ of the orthodox Hindu community that would have nothing to do with Ram Mohan's religious reforms and liberalism. It appeared every Monday, and contained 'miscellaneous information about various countries'. In April 1829 it became a bi-weekly and later was amalgamated with the *Dainik*.

Ram Mohan started or interested himself in many papers besides the *Sambad Kaumudi*. Looking farther afield than English and Bengali, he founded in April 1822 the first Persian weekly journal published in Calcutta, the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* or 'Mirror of News'. Ram Mohan himself wrote most of the editorials, many of which in English translations were reproduced by Buckingham in his *Calcutta Journal*. Deep thinking about fundamental truths and doctrines and a courageous search for truth marked these editorials. Certain observations on the doctrine of the Trinity in August 1822 were found 'extremely offensive' by the authorities. Soon afterwards Mr. Adam promulgated his Press ordinance already mentioned. When the petitions against it had failed and it was registered by the Supreme Court, Ram Mohan closed down the *Mirat*, declaring that he was unable to go on publishing under what he considered disgraceful conditions, and regretting that he, 'the humblest of the human race', should be no longer able to contribute towards the intellectual improvement of his countrymen.

Reference to two other Calcutta papers of the time may be made here, because of their linguistic multiformity due to Indian conditions, for one was biglot, the other polyglot. The *Jam-i-Jahan Nama*, a weekly published in Hindustani, and from its eighth number in Hindustani and Persian, first appeared in March 1822, and was the property of, and mainly conducted by, one of the large Calcutta English mercantile firms. Its object was to reproduce articles and news from the English papers and to collect and publish news of all that went on in India, whether in the Company's territories or outside them. The *Banga Dut* or 'Bengal Herald'



was a weekly in four languages—English, Bengali, Persian, Nagri (the script in which the Hindi language is written); its editor was R. Montgomery Martin, its proprietors were Ram Mohan Ray, Dwarkanath Tagore, Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Nilratan Haldar, Rajkrishna Singh, all men of high ideals and purpose. Ram Mohan's connexion with this was, however, short-lived.

One of Ram Mohan's achievements was to make Bengali prose a serviceable instrument for the common purposes of life. Some readers may find it hard to believe that even among the minority who could read their own language were many who could not read it understandingly. Though one of India's major languages, Bengali had been developed admirably as a language of poetry and religious thought, but hardly at all as an instrument for ordinary communication beyond the colloquial domestic stage. Except for legal formulae and religious tenets prose was almost as obscure as runes. It had to be fitted for the communication of information and ideas. Ram Mohan had to teach his countrymen to understand their own language as they read it. He had to contend with a Bengali prose that 'was a wilderness of parentheses and a hot-bed of sanskritisms', as Professor Sukumar Sen calls it.<sup>1</sup> Writers who followed Sanskrit models, he observes, often made their Bengali prose practically a sort of Sanskrit without the Sanskrit inflectional terminations. The writers of Johnsonese never obscured the natural vigour of English in the degree that the sanskritized writers of Bengali long obscured that tongue. To their kind of Bengali the only alternative, until Ram Mohan and others with the same linguistic taste cleared up the jungle, was a rude and uncouth style, easily understood by the generality, but made up of a vocabulary rustic in the extreme, a language by no means wanting in vigour, but of the earth earthy. Moved by the impulse to serve his people's needs in all ways, Ram Mohan in his introduction to his *Vedanta Grantha* and elsewhere taught them how to read straightforward simple literary prose. He had to begin at the beginning with simple instructions. 'The written language being unfamiliar, many people are unable to make out with ease the sense of any prose writing in Bengali by satisfactorily connecting two or three consecutive sentences.' Not only had Ram Mohan to teach his readers how to read. He also taught them the use of marks of punctuation. Early Bengali prose was 'a jumble and a jingle'. Stops were rare; beginnings and ends of sentences were hard to find. The Press had the same influence on other Indian languages as it had on Bengali. It was a stimulating, invigorating, and modernizing influence everywhere.

<sup>1</sup> Article on Ram Mohan's Bengali Prose contributed to the Commemoration Volume of the Ram Mohan Ray Centenary, 1933.

When a Press grows up in an illiterate land a hundred problems arise of which England has had no experience. The Press as publisher, whether of books or of newspapers—and the two functions have been closely connected in India—had deficiencies and handicaps of other kinds to contend with. India is a poor land, printing as an industry developed slowly, there was little market for what it produced. In most of the presses the equipment was scanty. Type was limited, much of it in wooden blocks; printing-machinery of the crudest; there is an old reference to 'the only iron press in Bengal'. Even in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, a nationalist paper still flourishing in Calcutta, changed over suddenly from Bengali and English to English only, it had to borrow some of the type, not possessing enough English type for eight pages. The difficulty with which many papers, especially those in small country towns, were produced, must have challenged the wits and resolution of even the most determined and resourceful of editors and printers. One paper at Akyab on the Burmese coast commenced its existence with two compositors. Before long one was drowned and the other left Akyab, whereupon the editor, not finding anyone else to fall back on, changed his journal from a semi-weekly to a weekly.

Another great difficulty was the getting of news in days when mails were slow, the telegraph, where found, was costly, and organizations for collecting information were wanting. Newspapers therefore depended in large measure on one another's news, on private letters put at their disposal, on gossip. They had none of the modern conventional shyness about mentioning contemporaries by name. Thus the *Friend of India* in one issue in 1851 gives information gathered from the *Hurkaru*, *Englishman*, *Bombay Times*, *Madras United Services Gazette*, *Delhi Gazette*, *Citizen*, *Agra Akhbar*, *Agra Messenger*, *Mofussilite*, *Lahore Chronicle*, *Eastern Star*, *Madras Spectator*, *Weekly Journal* and many others. About the difficulty of finding and estimating information in a vast land where communications were bad and ignorance was general, at a time when news agencies and similar friends of the editor had not been thought of, a comment of the *Friend of India* about the Insurrection, as it called what was afterwards known as the Mutiny, is informative. 'Partly from the widely scattered character of our operations, partly from the imperfect communications, and partly from the extraordinary secrecy maintained, the contemporary history of the campaign is becoming unintelligible.' This was on 13 May 1858, when India's Press had seventy years of experience.

The story of the relations between government and Press may now be resumed. Lord William Bentinck hesitated to establish



the liberty of the Press by legislative enactment but showed himself friendly, taking the view that the Press might be an auxiliary to good government. Amherst was as gentle; as a recent Indian writer has put it, 'his natural mildness of disposition revolted against the oppressiveness of the old Toryism of Calcutta prescribed by Mr. Adam', and so paved the way for Sir Charles Metcalfe by giving the Press seven years of actual freedom. Freedom came through legislation in 1835, when an Act, the work especially of Metcalfe and Macaulay, repealed the existing regulations in Bengal and Bombay. After this the only restriction retained as a government weapon was that printer and publisher of any newspaper should tell the magistrate where it was to be printed and published, should declare the existence of any printing-press, and put their names on every book and paper under penalty of fine and imprisonment.

The Court of Directors were considerably annoyed by Metcalfe's action, and said some hard things about it, but they did not go so far as to get it cancelled. From that time the general conditions under which the Press worked were those established by Metcalfe. This is not to say that all fears of possible excitement in country and army had disappeared. The view, however, prevailed that government had safeguards enough in its powers of quick legislation and administrative action to meet any danger that might at any time show its head. Control could be re-established, and was on occasion re-established, to meet special emergencies. Thus, in the Mutiny years free comment was felt to be dangerous; wherefore an Act of 1857 required licences for keeping printing-presses, which were granted only on condition that no book, newspaper, or pamphlet was published impugning the designs of the British government or bringing the government into hatred or creating chaos or inspiring hatred among the native population. The Bombay Governor, Lord Elphinstone, in supporting this view, said that Metcalfe had forgotten the connexion between the state of the Press and of other political institutions; that the Government of India must be despotic for a long time to come; that unrestricted freedom of the Press was incompatible with the Indian form of government. In short, he restated Munro's opinion, which was still vigorous in many minds. Even the *Friend of India*, the famous Serampore paper, was warned against repeating remarks of the kind contained in an article on the centenary of Plassey. At first defiant, it ultimately bowed the head, showed contrition, and parted with its editor, Henry Mead, who had succeeded Meredith Townsend. The article is reproduced in Appendix I, not only because of its intrinsic interest in this connexion but also because of its more general interest as indicating how the Press at

this time had begun to give a voice to Indian political thought and what directions the latter took. Thus we find a frank statement of the discontent caused by British rule and of the charges made against it—a selfish mercenary policy, the application of the might of western civilization without its benefits, the worship of wealth—and a picture is given of displaced rulers who would neither tolerate the gifts nor forgive the supremacy of infidel foreigners. On the other hand, it pointed out the solid advantages of British rule, the unfolding of the mental treasures of the West, the careers open to talent, the field open to reform, the coming of the schoolmaster, the railway, and the steam-engine, the hope of the dawn of a brighter day. All who read it will admit its competence as a piece of writing, and not many will fail to see how it must have perplexed a sorely harassed government.

The Act of 1857 was enforced against two papers only, though the Press generally was warned; it was limited to one year and applied to all kinds of papers. Canning said he found it impossible to draw a line of demarcation between English and Indian papers and must place the gag on both—whence the name the Gaggling Act. That discrimination was to be made by Lord Lytton in 1878, in whose opinion the very existence of British rule in India was jeopardized by Indian papers published in Indian languages, not by those published in English. The former, he said, were singled out because they were addressed solely to an ignorant, excitable, helpless class, who had no other means of information about the actions and motives of their rulers. Restriction, he contended, was called for by that supreme law, the safety of the State, and was no more an interference with the liberty of the Press than the prohibition of the promiscuous sale of deadly poisons was an interference with the freedom of trade. Therefore he contrived a Press Law, which was intended to prevent, rather than to penalize, offences; powers were given to magistrates to call for bonds from those in charge of newspapers published in Indian languages. There were 230 of these, but the measure, which infuriated Indian opinion, was enforced once only, against the printer of the *Som Prakash*; he gave a bond and stopped publication, starting the *Navabibhakar* in its place. Next year permission was sought and obtained to revive the *Som Prakash* and both papers were issued. There was no prosecution. Evidence for the view that the Act did have a bettering influence on the tone of certain newspapers can be found without much difficulty. Its effect on the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, then and now a vigorous nationalist paper of Calcutta, is vividly remembered as an interesting journalistic feat; for that paper, which was published in English and Bengali, in order to evade the Act changed to a completely English journal in one number.



Lord Ripon in January 1882 repealed both Acts, those of 1857 and 1878. After this the ordinary law, with the special section of the Penal Code, 124A,<sup>1</sup> was government's sole instrument for controlling printer and editor. There was, however, as Sir Henry Maine pointed out in 1887, no workable law of seditious libel in India,<sup>2</sup> and it was neither prevented nor punished except in the case of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, editor of the *Bombay Kesari*, in 1897.

In 1908 the terrorist campaign evoked a new Press Act directed not against the freedom of the Press nor against seditious activities in general, but against incitement to murder, armed revolt, and secret conspiracy; under it a magistrate could confiscate a printing-press and stop the issue of a paper. Ways of evading the Act were soon found out; so the more stringent Indian Press Act, I of 1910, was thought necessary. This was applicable to all kinds of newspapers; keepers of presses had to give security, and offending papers could be confiscated. This caused great bitterness and was found of very little use; a committee of officials and non-officials was in 1921 appointed to examine its working, and on this committee's advice it was repealed in 1922. Government, however, felt unarmed when trouble with the Press continued, and Lord Irwin, than whom India has had no more generous ruler, was compelled by events, and especially by the civil disobedience movement and the riots it engendered, to promulgate an ordinance reviving the powers of the Press Act of 1910. Nor has the Press been overlooked in recent Bengal legislation aimed at those who direct, participate in, and encourage the terrorist movement that has been so prominent a feature in that province. That apart, government's policy towards the Press to-day is that it is governed by the ordinary law of India.

The foregoing narrative tells something of the difficulties under which both Press and government laboured, some of which have often prevented them from being on good terms. An irreplaceable government tends to put the Press generally in the opposition. What is the purpose of supporting a government that is never in danger? Mr. Robert Knight, business man and journalist, founder and editor of more than one paper in Bombay and Calcutta, as

<sup>1</sup> 'Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards His Majesty or the Government, or promotes or attempts to promote feelings of enmity or ill-will between different classes of His Majesty's subjects shall be punished with transportation for life or any shorter term, to which fine may be added or with imprisonment which may extend to ten years, to which fine may be added, or with fine'. The explanations define disaffection as including disloyalty and all feelings of enmity or ill will and make it clear that comments on the measures of the Government with a view to obtain their alteration by lawful means, without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt, or disaffection, are not offences.

<sup>2</sup> T. H. Ward, *The Reign of Queen Victoria* (1887), p. 467.

wise and brave an interpreter of events as ever served India by his pen, put that clearly in a letter written for the information of the Viceroy, Lytton, in 1876. 'It seems to me that under the system of administration we have established in India the only right conception of the office of the Press is that of Her Majesty's opposition, and whether that opposition shall be well-informed and loyal or the reverse, depends wholly upon the relations established therewith by the Government.' The whole of that letter, which is reproduced in full in Appendix II, deserves careful study, as a sane and balanced evaluation of the situation in India, where the people desired to understand the principles and course of administration and looked to the Press to satisfy their desire, and where the absence of representative institutions, and of a Parliament allowing of interpellations, might be endured if there was an outlet for opinion and a sympathetic government, but where the absence of such institutions might become intolerable if the Press were treated as if it were a public enemy. Similarly Mr. (afterwards Sir Charles) Stevens, a member of the Select Committee on the Bill to amend the Indian Penal Code (1898), wrote:

'The position of the native Press must necessarily be peculiar. It must, from the nature of things, be always in opposition. If we found a native paper constantly expatiating on the blessings of English rule, on the unmixed advantages of western civilization, and on the administrative and private virtues of English officials, we should not respect the editor or his staff the more for it; we should think him a hypocrite who was playing what he considered to be a paying game. . . . We must therefore look to native writers for criticism of government measures and of government servants.'

Similar judgements could be quoted from critics throughout the nineteenth century. Government being in a peculiar position put the Press in a peculiar position. The latter claimed as large a charter as the wind, and freedom was often undoubtedly an excuse for licence.

'If', says Sir Alfred Watson, who was for many years editor of *The Statesman*, 'one judged the control of the Indian Press by the letter of the laws under which it is produced, one might say that it was not a free Press, but in my personal experience during my years in India I can say that no Press in the world enjoyed such latitude in the expression of opinion, and over so large a field none so flagrantly abused its freedom.'<sup>1</sup>

Much research is necessary before a complete history of India's Press throughout the nineteenth century can be compiled, and even then it would be fragmentary, for the full story of many papers is not on record. Some begin, and that is all. Others end,

<sup>1</sup> *Asiatic Review*, 1933, p. 259.



apparently without a beginning. Paper runs into paper in bewildering fashion. Only a few, English and Indian, show long courses with strong streams. Not all have been influential or profitable. In India newspaper production has of necessity been for the most part a small industry, in places almost a cottage or family industry; few newspapers have commanded the resources requisite for activity on a large scale. Alluding to newspapers printed in a vernacular the commentator on the circulations of the middle nineteenth century to whom we have referred says that 'it is much to be doubted whether more than two of the newspapers afford a decent subsistence to the editors'; that 'with one exception no newspaper owns an iron printing press'; that 'there can scarcely be a more irksome and less agreeable vocation so far as money is concerned than that of a native editor, but it serves to give him a certain standing and influence in society which compensates for every inconvenience'. The lot of the editor of a struggling newspaper at the present day is scarcely any better, if we may judge from the language of one in Appendix III. The English Press in India had to grow in respectability, which it did rapidly though handicapped by weaker members who lowered its tone. The Indian Press, whether in English or Indian languages, beginning later and controlled at first by men of high ideals who thought it their duty to give sober and solid instruction to a people wanting in opportunities for education, escaped many weaknesses, though it developed many of its own. Together all, English and Indian, have made a large contribution to the intricate pattern that is India's modern history. They have insisted on being heard. They have fought the official idea that comment on acts and policies of government is in itself indecorous. They have been courageous, if often indiscreet and unrestrained. If Company Directors in London and their servants in India were at times over-sensitive, editors and staffs have not always been both honest and judicious. That publicity with sincere comment is helpful to both government and people is a comparatively modern idea even in England. We need not be surprised if it came more laggardly to India.

A new phase in the history of the Indian section (by far the larger section) of India's Press came with the growth of nationalism and the development in importance of the Indian National Congress. It was no longer a general educator as much as a political tutor. The demand for self-government changed the character of the writing in many newspapers by giving a lively and inspiring cause that provided the material for urgent daily comment. The tactics changed. Occasional broadsides would no longer do. Continual rifle and machine-gun fire took their place. Did government expose a head or finger it was shot at. So, we may almost

say, a new way of writing English, or vernacular, quickly grew up; leader writers brought into use vigorous supple language that discarded burdens so as to be always alert and ready for effective action. English as it comes from the universities in India tends, if not alloyed with other more common metal, to be heavy and learned, a defect which is hardly to be avoided in a land that loves and studies England's literature but has little opportunity of meeting England's idiom of to-day. But no one who reads India's nationalistic newspapers will doubt that they have mastered this idiom for their own purposes. That they always use it with as much sincerity as skill governments are not likely to admit, nor even, we suppose, the Congress governments in most of the Indian provinces. Those who confidently prophesied that acerbity towards governments would disappear from leading articles as soon as India had representative institutions, and governments were no longer irreplaceable administrations executing the will of Whitehall, have not yet been justified by the event. Politics, Indian and to a less extent imperial and European, are now the chief topic of newspapers in India. Political views seem to be more in demand than news. The leading article has a place which it has largely lost in Great Britain. Interest is centred on, but is not confined to India. As under the stress of danger the people of Britain have become surprisingly alert to whatever is going on in the world that may affect conditions and relations in Europe, so India too is taking an unusual interest in affairs beyond its borders.

Our survey has been rapid and much has perforce been omitted; but to sum up. From small and not very worthy beginnings India's Press has become an important instructor, in a land where instruction about what was going on in the world was for long hard to come by. A British institution, it was early in the nineteenth century used by leading Indians who were painfully conscious how lacking in information and understanding of current events their country was. Not that Indians in general realized the need of it; we have seen how few read papers even in the middle of that century. The continual struggle with government strengthened and stimulated the Press if also it often did harm to both. Good men and good papers were lost through it. That struggle was perhaps inevitable. Once Indians became alert to their own affairs it was hardly possible that they would ever again look at things with the eyes of the Company. To the Company quiet and security were dominant considerations, whereas the thoughtful Indian, seeing what was going on in other lands, was at once eager to share in their advance and to preserve what was essentially his own. The Company's ideal was an obedient and satisfied India instructed in the fundamental principles of morality and not worrying about



day-to-day matters. As Robert Knight's able letter explained, when a government cannot be removed, it can only be criticized and attacked in the hope of impelling it to progress, and the language of criticism and attack is often unrestrained in the same hope. Sir Thomas Munro's famous minute sets out the reasons why the Company was ever cautious in what it did and permitted. The possibility of disturbing excitement in the people, and especially in the army, was an ever-present nightmare. Had Munro's point of view prevailed much friction and unpleasantness would have been avoided, but at the exorbitant cost of making the newspapers deferential, timid, and useless. A Press that did not comment freely, subject to such restraint as editors with a sense of responsibility imposed, would have done India no good and have been no influence for betterment. For it is important to remember that India had no Parliament, and that apart from the Press there was hardly a channel by which the dissatisfactions and desires of the people could find their way to those in supreme authority. A deferential, timid Press could not have flourished as a business investment, for who would have supported newspapers without political purpose and conviction? Let that consideration be set against all the weaknesses and faults and defects that papers in India have suffered from. That papers opposed to government, as most Indian-owned papers have been, and are, for reasons to be found above, have at times of excitement and bitterness been guilty of shocking excesses in language and methods of criticism will be denied by few.<sup>1</sup> Recent years have seen Press laudation of murderers of officials, even special memorial numbers in black edges on the day of the execution of one of them in Calcutta. Against that may be set a want of restraint in English-owned papers on occasion. The blood lust of these during the Mutiny was a disgrace to the race and the profession. Only one or two strong-minded, calm-hearted editors withstood the passions of the time.

In 1868 Sir Henry Maine, when Law Member of the Government of India, complained that European cries were in the vast majority of cases either calumnies or misrepresentations of the policy of the government and that the Indian newspapers merely echoed them, unless they perceived that the interests of Indians pointed the other way—and this they constantly failed to do. Ten years later another Law Member, Mr. Arthur Hobhouse, Q.C.,

<sup>1</sup> A leading article in *The Times* of 15 May 1930 expresses the view of decent journalism. 'That country is truly cursed with newspapers in which, as in India, journalism can mean a systematic and malevolent publication of sour falsehoods known as such to those who write and publish them, the circumstantial narration of events that never happened, and the invention and dissemination of charges known to be baseless, all supporting and sharpening incitements to hatred and violence.'

observed, in a minute of 10 August 1878, that the English newspapers did more than native ones to bring the government into contempt and odium. He was referring especially to the three Bengal newspapers, the *Englishman*, *Friend of India*, and *Statesman*, and to articles suggesting that the English were taxing or rather plundering India for the benefit of England, and similar excursions into politico-economics. There is not space to pursue the matter, but a newspaper might retort that it is its business to examine and give public instruction about problems of such importance. All sections of the Press, English-owned, Indian-owned in English, and the vernaculars, have given much offence to governments and to one another. Yet there is in the records of government a wealth of recognition that the tone of the Press has been generally good and its influence beneficial.

This chapter not being specifically a history of the Press in India, we have not separated in the narrative the three main elements, the English-owned papers, the Indian-owned English papers, and the vernaculars. They have worked together, suffered together, often quarrelled among themselves. In each section there have been great newspapers and great personalities. The history of the first would move round the *Englishman* of Calcutta, Tory of Tories, that after a long life was recently absorbed in the *Statesman*; the *Times of India* in Bombay; the *Civil and Military Gazette* of Lahore; the *Pioneer* of Allahabad, and more recently Lucknow, whose leaders it used to be said were written by governors and its book reviews by lieutenant-governors; the *Madras Mail*: all strong forces. Stocqueler of the *Englishman*, Chesney of the *Pioneer*, Robert Knight of the *Times of India* and, especially, the *Statesman*, are remembered as editors and publicists, while the Lahore paper and the Allahabad *Pioneer* are proud to remember a young sub-editor named Rudyard Kipling. The English papers are often attacked by Indians as subservient to government, a fault that governments have seldom found in them. Edited by Englishmen brought up in English ideals and traditions, their policy is in general the application of these to India so far as conditions permit and needs justify; it is natural that they should find more to approve than Indian papers have generally found in governments guided by the same traditions.

Among Indian-owned English papers would come the *Bengali* and *Indian Mirror* of Calcutta, both passed away; the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of Calcutta; the *Hindu* of Madras, one of many papers brought to vigorous life by the Congress movement. Of the vernaculars we have mentioned a number in the preceding pages. India remembers among its own journalists the reformers Ram Mohan Ray and Keshab Chandra Sen; Surendranath Banerjea, who



became a Minister in Bengal; Haris Chandra Mukharji; the Ghose family of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*; Ranade, Malabari, and Tilak of Bombay. It remembers them as few journalists are remembered in England; they live in the mind as instructors live, for India reveres its teachers. These names are but illustrations, a few of many who are notable, and are not arranged in any scale of values. Many men famous in other walks have done their turn. Law, journalism, and public affairs are activities that many have combined, and still combine. Nor is it accident when prominent Indian journalists have been connected with the work of education; journalism and education are looked on as different aspects of the one noble activity of giving India the knowledge it needs.

## APPENDIX I

*From the 'Friend of India' of 25 June 1857*

### THE CENTENARY OF PLASSEY

WE have glided into the second centenary of English rule in India, and Hindus and Musulmans who study the mysteries of fate are well-nigh in despair. The stars and scriptures told them that on Monday last we had completed our allotted term of mastership, when the strength which had hitherto been resistless, the courage that never faltered, would pass away, and we should become in turn the easy prey of our vassals. The favour of the gods is not a perpetual gift, and though sire and son have witnessed so often what must to them appear supernatural results, it was but reasonable to suppose that our store of miracles would be exhausted at last. We share with them the belief in hidden influences, only what they look upon as being natural and commonplace is to us the domain of the marvellous. It is easy to understand how we gained power and wealth and glory at the commencement of the cycle, but hard beyond measure to find how we have lost all three at its close. When you can succeed in realizing to the imagination the most foolish thing, the most improbable thing, and the most timid thing; and have blended all these together and multiplied them, and worked them into what is called a policy, you may perhaps get some clue to the solution of the problem, but all other modes of induction will hopelessly fail.

The qualities of mind which enable a man to accumulate it, are often those which hinder him from making a proper use of it. It was necessary for the conquest of Hindustan that the East India Company should exist, for it is only the intense greediness of traders that could have won for us the sovereignty of the country. The enemies of the Company's rule assert that they made and broke treaties, planned and fought battles for the mere love of gain. Whatever degree of interference with private or public rights was needful for the purpose of collecting revenue, received instant and eager sanction; whatever concerned merely the welfare of Asiatic souls or the social interests of the great body of Englishmen and Hindus was either coldly ignored or bitterly

assailed. They imported for their own use the might of civilization, but never cared to exhibit to the natives its beneficent features. Wealth embodies all the attributes of their good deity, to whom was rendered with cheerful devotion the homage of heart and brain. The evil principle was symbolized by power, and where they failed to vanquish they fell down and worshipped. Without a spark of patriotic feeling they set on the brow of England a gem of priceless value; without care for Christianity they paved the way for overthrow of idolatry. Be it so, but the evil which they wrought has well-nigh passed away; the good of which they have been the not unconscious instruments will go on multiplying for ever.

A hundred years is but a small point in the lifetime of a nation. It may be a period of sowing or of reaping the harvest, of giant labours such as shall influence the destiny of remote generations, or of utter folding of the hands to sleep. We found India destitute of invention and enterprise, ignorant of liberty and of the blessings of peace. We have placed her face to face with the forces of our civilization, and have yet to see if there are no subtle invigorating influences that can be transmitted through her aged frame. We have given her liberty such as she has not enjoyed for centuries, and never save by brief and long-interrupted snatches. The Hindu stands upon the same platform with the Englishman; shares equal privileges with him; and challenges for himself as great a measure of the protection and immunities accorded by the State; he has no political enemies, and his grievances are all social. There is much to be remedied within, but without all is quiet and secure. If he has a new part to play in the world's history, the stage is clear for him, and there is an audience ready to sympathize and applaud. Whatever he has in him of creative ability may find easy vent and ready acceptance. We have swept away the obstacles which stood in the path of intellect and courage; it rests only with nature and himself whether he achieves success or otherwise. A second Sevajee is happily impossible, but another Luther would find an easier task than that which was imposed upon the monk of Wittenberg. The inventor, the author, the man of science, will meet ready welcome and sure reward. We spread out before the dormant Asiatic soul all the mental treasures of the West, and feel only too happy in being allowed to distribute them.

It is a great crime in some instances to trample out a nationality; to strangle in infancy what might have grown up to be one of the fairest births of time; but except in the case of the Sikhs, there is no example of the kind to be alleged against our countrymen. The Musulman power was effete long before the battle of Plassey, and such as Clive found the Mahomedans in the days of Surajah Dowlah, we encounter them in the time of the deposed king of Oude. Cruel, sensual, and intolerant, they are unfit to rule and unwilling to serve. Claiming to exercise sway as of Divine right and yet destitute of every gift with which nature has endowed the races meant by destiny to dominate over the world, they fell by necessity under the power of a nation replete with energy and resolution, and loathe with all the bitterness of hate the infidels who have subdued them. They will never tolerate our gifts or



forgive our supremacy. We may load them with blessings, but the reward will be curses. We stand between them and a fancied earthly paradise, and are not classed in their list of good angels.

The Mahrattas have none of the elements of greatness in their character, and speaking in the interests of the dusky millions, we do not regret Assaye, Deeg and Maharajpore, but it is otherwise with regard to the Sikhs, who, had they flourished as we have seen them two centuries back, or never come in contact with the might of England, would perhaps have uprooted the tenets of Hindu and Musulman, and breathed a new spirit into the followers of Mahomed and Brahma. Humanity, however, will be content with their overthrow. The Bible is a better book than the Granth, and Christianity is superior to the Khalsa. Regenerated Hinduism might have obtained a new lease of existence, but it would have gained nothing in morals, and effected but little for human happiness. Its sole gain would have been power and the example of universal destruction.

It may also be alleged against us that we have deposed the kings and ruined the nobles of India, but why should the world sigh over that result? Monarchs who always took the wages, but seldom performed the work, of Government, and aristocrats who looked upon authority as a personal right, and have never been able to comprehend what is meant by the sovereignty of the people, are surely better out of the way. No Englishman in these days deplores the Wars of the Roses and would like to see the Cliffords and Warwicks restored again to life. France bears with calmness the loss of her old nobility; Europe at large makes steady contributions to the list of kings out of employment. Had princes and rajahs in Hindoostan been worth conserving, they would have retained their titles and power. The class speedily dies out in the natural course of mortality, and it is not for the benefit of society that it should be renewed.

Array the evil against the acknowledged good; weigh the broken pledges, the ruined families, the impoverished ryots, the imperfect justice against the missionary and the schoolmaster, the railway and the steam engine, the abolition of suttee, and the destruction of the Thugs, and declare in which scale the balance lies! For every anna that we have taken from the noble, we have returned a rupee to the trader. We have saved more lives in peace than we have sacrificed in war. We have committed many blunders and crimes, wrought evil by premeditation and good by instinct; but when all is summed up the award must be in our favour. And with the passing away of the present cloud, there will dawn a brighter day both for England and India. We shall strengthen at the same time our hold upon the soil and upon the hearts of the people; tighten the bonds of conquest and of mutual interest. The land must be thrown open to the capital and enterprise of Europe; the ryot lifted by degrees out of his misery, and made to feel that he is a man if not a brother; and everywhere heaven's gifts of climate and circumstance made the most of. The first centenary of Plassey was ushered in by the revolt of the native army, the second may be celebrated in Bengal by a respected Government and a Christian population.

## APPENDIX II

*Letter from Robert Knight, then editor and owner of 'The Statesman' (Calcutta) to Major Owen Burne, Private Secretary to the Viceroy, Lord Lytton, 31 July 1876*

You are good enough to express your wish that I would state for the information of H.E. the Viceroy my views as to the relations that now subsist between the Government and the Indian Press.

The Government of India is necessarily a despotism, tempered only by the character of the men who administer it, their accountability to the House of Commons, and by the right of complete freedom of speech which has been accorded to the people. The State has conferred upon the people all the privileges of free men and, in the conscious integrity of its purpose, has conceded the right of free speech in every part of the empire. In doing this, the State seems to me to have placed in the hands of the newspaper Press a very responsible trust. It is not the place of the newspapers, I think, to be courtiers to the Government, but to represent the interests of all classes. And there is no country in the world, perhaps, in which it is more important that the Press should discharge this duty. But there has been a tendency of late years to less cordiality between Government and the Press than ever existed, and I do not think that it has been the fault of the latter. The Government is less ready than it formerly was to avail itself of our help in the only way in which it can be given. As to the value of this help, Lord William Bentinck assured a deputation that waited on him at Calcutta many years ago 'that he had derived more information from the Indian Press than from all the Councils, all the Boards, and all the Secretaries by whom he was surrounded'. Now no one will maintain that the Press is not more ably conducted to-day than it was then; but the Government, as a whole, has come to look with less magnanimity upon it, especially upon the communication of its servants therewith, and in particular upon any criticism of its proceedings or measures thereby. 'The change is for the worse altogether. To expect the Indian Press to be 'official' is, I think, to mistake its trust; while if we exclude loyal and well-informed criticism from its columns, we must not complain if they are filled with what is not loyal and is ill-informed. By drawing nearer to the Press, without any attempt to influence it otherwise than by sympathy, very much might be done, I am sure, to raise the character of the vernacular Press, and certainly very much to improve that of the English papers.

It seems to me that under the system of administration we have established in India, the only right conception of the office of the Press is that of Her Gracious Majesty's Opposition, and whether that opposition shall be well-informed and loyal or the reverse, depends wholly upon the relations established therewith by the Government. If it shows sympathy therewith, admits it as far as possible to its councils, places all the information it properly can at its disposal, shows a readiness to defer to public wishes and opinions when they are reasonable, and instead of regarding the newspapers as a natural enemy, treats the



Press as an ally actuated by the same desire as itself for the public welfare, and finally gives it such support and encouragement as it may reasonably look for—the country may patiently endure the want of those representative rights that are so prized and cherished wherever they exist, but that at present are admitted to be out of our reach in India. If, on the other hand, the Government shows no sympathy, is jealous of all appearance of consulting it, excludes it from all information upon subjects of current interest, shows no deference to public wishes, however reasonable, looks upon the Press as factious and inspired by no real desire for the public good, and gives neither the support nor the encouragement it might reasonably expect—then the want of representative institutions becomes unendurable, and the whole Press glides insensibly into an attitude of hostility to the Government. I shall not conceal my conviction that we have been tending towards this state of matters for some years in India, and that it received a most unhappy development under the rule of Lord Northbrook.

At present there is not the slightest sympathy with the Press, nor the least disposition to assist it. Instead of any desire being evinced to conciliate its sympathies, it is made to feel that it is a matter of indifference to the Government whether it sinks or swims. Thus the papers are expected to publish gratuitously the notifications of the various departments such as the Post Office, the Commissariat Department, and the Customs and Opium Departments; and although it has been repeatedly represented that such notifications should be paid for as advertisements, and although the amount would be most trifling, the Government has refused to show even this small amount of interest in, or consideration for, the Press. I am persuaded that with the vernacular Press in particular a very trifling outlay in this way would give the Government a hold upon the sympathies of its conductors which, if wise, it would seize at once. Thus, what could be more proper than advertising the land sales of this province in its vernacular papers, putting them under a mild but effectual discipline in the matter, by giving them to understand that the Government was desirous of helping every journalist who honourably used his columns to promote honest discussion of public questions and maintained complete respectability of tone. But the Government practically treats the Press as though it were Bohemian, and in all passive ways ignores and discourages it. This attitude is felt sensibly and calls forth a corresponding one on the other side.

Passing by these considerations, however, I come to the question of the footing upon which the Press should stand towards the Government as to the information communicated to it thereby. Under Lord Northbrook, the system was simply fatal. The almost open practice was resorted to of selling information to any journal that would give the Government support. No journalist of any self-respect will ever enter into a compact of this kind, while the paper that does prostitute its columns in this way covers not only itself with odium, but the Government also. The Government must never condescend to buy public support. A strong Government will challenge it, and if kindly and sympathetic in its attitude towards the Press, will secure it.

To begin with, the Government does not sufficiently sympathise with the desire of the public for information. It must be remembered that we have no Parliament in India in which interpellations can be made to the Government, while the desire for information upon subjects of current interest is just as strong here as there. A disposition exists to make everything secret in India. The tendency has, of course, been inherited from the days when all Europeans outside the official class were looked upon as adventurers and interlopers, who knew nothing about the administration of the country and cared nothing about it so long as they were not interfered with in their own pursuits. But this state of matters has long passed away, and a very strong desire exists in the great non-official class of the country and in the educated native community to understand both the principles and the course of our administration, our relations with Native Princes and with the States beyond the frontiers. Every Government must, of course, have its *arcana* which it is neither desirable nor wise to throw open to the public gaze, but the tendency in India is to make a secret of everything, and the general run of business is involved in a degree of mystery that is far from conducive to the public good. An 'Editors' Room' was established some years ago in each of the Secretariats of the country and for a time valuable papers were laid upon the table, but the institution dwindled down into a mere sham, until the *pabulum* put on the table was not worth appropriating.

It seems to me most desirable that the Government should possess some means by which it might communicate to the Press, as far as it may be prudent and possible to do so, the course of its proceedings, the information it is receiving, the views with which it is regarded, the purposes and desires of the Government, and the special difficulties that embarrass its course. The practice of giving exclusive information on such subjects to any one journal is sure to produce general dissatisfaction; while exact information is all that is wanted, nine times out of ten, to secure public sympathy and approval. I think there should be a special Press Bureau in the Government, the duty of whose chief should be to acquaint himself with the writings of every journal in the country. This would be easy enough with the English papers as they are not very numerous and a practised hand would get the entire heart out of it daily in an hour's time. He will see from them what the course of public thought is on current events, on what subjects information is manifestly desired, on what questions wrong impressions are prevalent and what matters ought to come prominently to the notice of the Government. Having mastered their contents, it seems to be desirable that he should see personally the head of every department, to consult with him as to the desirableness or otherwise of communicating with the journals on these subjects; while the Press should be invited to communicate with him freely on all questions concerning which they desire information. As the most influential native papers are published in English, they would be placed on the same footing, and daily bulletins would issue from the Bureau to all the journals simultaneously. There would often be nothing to communicate, sometimes a great deal, but nothing



would tend more, I think, to the growth of sympathetic and cordial relations between the Press and the Government than the establishment of a Bureau of this nature, under the administration of a man of broad views and general culture. He would be at once a sort of Dionysius' ear to the Government and the channel of free and unreserved communication between the Government and the people. The vernacular Press ought frequently to be reviewed by him, through the medium of the provincial summaries into which their contents are translated. In the course of a very few months, he would know the exact character of every native journal in the country, and would be able to advise as to the course to be taken towards the vernacular Press as a whole. I believe the Government might indefinitely improve its character and settle its loyalty by a wise attitude towards it. A broad, sympathetic man really interested in his work, with the art of instilling good humour into his correspondence, would change the tone of the whole Press of India in six months, if he was really the right man for the work. All Press grievances should go to him, and if fitted for the task, he would quickly be on friendly and confidential relations with every editor in the country. I would have no official *Moniteur*, nor anything approaching to it, but a personal bond between the Government and the Press. Everything, of course, will depend upon the *man* in the working of such a system. A cold and narrow official would fail absolutely; a broad genial man of sound judgment and commonsense would succeed absolutely.

To sum up. The Government should abandon its attitude of total indifference to the Press and should frankly recognise in it an opposition with which courteous and friendly relations were to be maintained; and in all reasonable and proper ways it should be recognized, honoured and assisted.

To establish and maintain such relations, I think there should be a Press Bureau administered by a broad and genial man, endowed with prudence and plenty of commonsense, whose special office it would be to invite the confidence of every journal in the country and establish friendly relations therewith. It would be for him to communicate freely what information can be given them and to tell them frankly what it was deemed necessary to reserve.

I think that in the course of a very few months the Director of such a Bureau would become a real mentor of the Press and would succeed in re-awakening those sympathies for Government which have been so largely alienated by its attitude of late years. There would be this great advantage in such a Bureau that it would divert from the shoulders of Government to itself nearly all the complaints and grievances of the Press, and a change of Director would be the 'constitutional' remedy when their complaints and grievances attained a real magnitude. A *censor* we cannot have; the very name is fatal to all idea of sympathy, and what we want is, I think, a mentor of the Press whose office it would be to evoke and maintain sympathetic relations between the Government and the Press by extending frank and cordial assistance to it. I do not think an official man at all likely to succeed in such an appointment, unless he is exceptionally broad indeed.

## APPENDIX III

*Translation of an Article published in the 'Adil' (Delhi) of  
22 December 1932*

THE Urdu papers . . . are unable to give consistent support to any particular policy because the one absorbing thought of the people who run them is how to get enough to eat. If they cannot get the ink and paper required for producing the paper, how are they to run it at all, and how can they produce the hymns of praise and pictures with which they flatter the wealthy and degrade their readers' intelligence?

Compare the Press in England and America, where a single journal has a circulation of a million, where they pay their staff thousands of rupees a month, where the Governments themselves assist and encourage them, and where all the merchants and manufacturers and cinema companies spend fortunes in advertising in them. The Urdu papers in Hindustan are absolutely without any of this sort of support, so to whom can they look to supply a foundation for their prosperity, and for what class in the country are they to act as spokesmen? The result is that they merely supply stale news taken from other papers. The clubs, societies, schools, and factories haven't the spirit to subscribe even eight or ten rupees a year in order to get a regular supply of cheap but reliable news and good articles. Even on this paltry amount they ask for a rebate of 30 or 50 per cent. The wretched newspapers are compelled to give their purchasers once or twice a year presents in the form of books or gaily painted calendars in order to stimulate their interest.

Even in a great port like Bombay, where lakhs and crores of business is done every day, I am told there are not more than two or three Urdu papers which can make enough to meet their ordinary expenses. They are sold in the bazaars at a halfpenny or a farthing a copy, and in the evening, with the proceeds, the editor will get five hundred or a thousand copies of his next issue printed at some job-press, filled with scissors and paste items of news, pirated from other papers. This with a little local gossip makes up the paper, and the same individual is proprietor, editor, manager and translator, and often does the lithographing as well.

Papers of this sort give very little evidence of life and progress in Indian communities, and they reflect no credit on the country.

(From the *Asiatic Review*, 1933, pp. 270-1.)



## CHAPTER VI

### MECHANISM AND TRANSPORT

**G**REAT as were the achievements of Indian civilization, they were chiefly intellectual. The genius of the people was more introspective than practical. It dwelt mainly in the world of ideas; speculation as to the nature of the soul was more congenial to it than the investigation of the properties of matter. Great thinkers were more concerned with the laws of thought and the purification of the soul than with knowledge of physical laws and mastery of the forces of nature. The powers of reasoning and the imaginative faculties were highly developed, and their fruits may be seen in subtle systems of logic and philosophy and in the treasures of classical literature. Science was not neglected; there was knowledge of mathematics, astronomy, and medicine at an early age, though it has to be admitted that, so far at any rate as medicine was concerned, there was no advance but rather retrogression in the medieval period. There are also indications of proficiency in some of the applied sciences. The famous iron pillar at Delhi points to a high degree of metallurgical skill having been acquired as early as the fourth century A.D., and the manufacture of the crucible steel known as wootz in South India anticipated by many centuries the process of cementation adopted in Europe for the production of high grades of steel. Architecture showed an intimate knowledge of statics. The ability to move great masses of stone was little less than that of the Egyptians; the monolith pillars of Asoka, for example, stand 40 to 50 feet high and weigh about 50 tons; the temple at Tanjore is surmounted by a single block of stone weighing 80 tons, which had to be raised to a height of 190 feet. Engineering skill was displayed in ingenious methods of conserving and distributing water for the purpose of agriculture. In South India there are still great reservoirs which are known to have been in existence for over 1,000 years; the word *anicut*, which is applied to the dams by which water is impounded, has passed from Tamil into the technical terminology of the modern irrigation engineer. Despite these achievements, however, there can be no doubt that the general trend of the Indian intellect was subjective rather than objective, and that there was little of the inventive and mechanical aptitude which was displayed at an early age by the Chinese and at a later period by European nations.

In nothing perhaps was the mechanical backwardness of India more apparent than in its failure either to invent or to adopt the art of printing. Typography had been in use for the production

of books since the tenth century A.D. in China, and since the fifteenth century in Europe, whose intellectual condition it had transformed. But it found no place in India until half a century after the sea route had been discovered, and it did not become an Indian industry till the beginning of the nineteenth century, but remained an exclusive possession of the European nations which had made settlements in India, such as the Portuguese, Danes, and English. Smoking became the rage almost as soon as the tobacco plant introduced by the Portuguese was acclimatized, but the art of printing was neglected. Outside the European settlements the only purely Indian press of which there appears to be a trace was one which was found at Agra in 1803, when that city was surrendered to Lord Lake, with type set ready for printing. When a proof was taken it was found to be part of the Koran. The type was said to have been of excellent quality, as good as anything to be found in Europe; possibly, if not probably, it had been imported from Europe, where Arabic type had long been cast for the use of compositors on the learned side of printing-houses.

It is difficult for a European at the present day to visualize a society which was still in ignorance of the art of printing and in which also the great majority of the people were unable to read and write. The only books were manuscripts, the product of a laborious process of transcription, which were the treasured possession of a small wealthy or cultured class. The Mughals had immense collections—the imperial library at Agra, in 1641, contained 24,000 volumes—but their contents were destroyed or dispersed in the centuries of turmoil which supervened on the downfall of their empire. There were also large private collections up to the time of the Mutiny which shared the same fate. There seem to have been few large libraries of Hindu works. At Nadia, a seat of Hindu learning, which has been called the Oxford of India, Dr. Carey could not discover more than forty manuscripts, and most Hindu families of the literate class had only a metrical abridgement of the *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata* with perhaps one or two minor poems. The Muslims had introduced the use of paper about the tenth century A.D., but in some parts, such as Orissa and South India, the material still consisted of fragile and perishable palm leaves, on which the characters were traced with an iron stylus, ink being rubbed afterwards into the incisions. In Orissa at the beginning of the nineteenth century it was difficult to find office clerks able to use pen and paper. There were no books in the schools, where children learnt from oral dictation and wrote letters and numbers on the earthen floors or on boards covered with sand, or plantain leaves, or palm leaves. The great body of the people derived their knowledge of the



works of their poets from the recitations of itinerant bards, who committed them to memory. There were no newspapers in the modern sense of the word but only manuscript news-letters, which resembled the English news-letters of the time of Charles II in being filled with gossip as well as news, and in making scandal a special feature of their contents.

Printing was introduced into India by the Portuguese in the second half of the sixteenth century, and the first books were printed at Goa. Among the earliest were a *Catechism of Doctrine* (1556) by Francis Xavier and *The Spiritual Compendium of the Christian Life* (1561) by the first Archbishop of Goa, Gaspar de Leão; as its title indicates, the latter was religious in character, consisting of sermons which the Archbishop had preached during a visitation of his diocese. A little later came a book on Indian simples and drugs (*Colloquios dos Simples e Drogas e Causas Medicinaes da India*) by Garcia da Horta (Goa, 1563), which is said to have contained the first account of Asiatic cholera, and had the distinction of giving to the world the first verses published by the poet Camoens, which were composed in honour of the author and printed as a preface to his book. Other early publications were tracts written by Archbishop Leão, of which one was directed against the Jews and the other against the Muslims. Before the end of the sixteenth century presses were set up at Cochin and Ambalakkadu as well as Goa, and books in Indian languages began to appear. In 1577 and 1793 two Tamil books by Jesuit missionaries were printed; in 1615 the *Christian Purana* by Father Thomas Stevens appeared in the Konkani dialect of Marathi, and in 1634 a *Life of St. Peter* by Estavão da Cruz in Marathi.<sup>1</sup>

The first press in British territory appears to have been due to the initiative of an Indian of Bombay, named Bhimji Parekh, who in 1670 asked for a printer to be sent out from England 'for that he hath a curiosity and earnest inclination to have some of the Brahmini writings in print'. The Court of Directors of the East India Company complied with this novel request, and in 1674 sent out a printer named Hills with a printing-press, type, and paper. Unfortunately for Bhimji Parekh, the type was roman, and, to remedy the mistake, the Directors decided eight years later to send to Bombay a type-founder to cut what they called the Banian letters. It is unknown what use was made of his typographical skill. In South India a printing-press was set up early in the eighteenth century by the Danish Lutheran Mission at Tranquebar, apparently with English help.<sup>2</sup> It published over thirty books in Tamil and

<sup>1</sup> See R. Garnett, 'Introduction of European Printing into the East', *Transactions and Proceedings of the Second International Library Conference* (1898).

<sup>2</sup> A printing-press and a printer, Jonas Finck, were sent out from England in 1710. See Sir W. W. Hunter, *The India of the Queen* (1908), p. 249.

more than a score in Portuguese, which was a lingua franca on the seaboard. The output of this, as of other mission presses, consisted of religious works, such as translations of the Bible and devotional works intended to assist in the conversion of Indians to Christianity and in the instruction of converts in the tenets of the faith. Government took the lead, and gave printing a secular tone, in North India, where in 1778 it established a press at Hooghly for printing books in Sanskrit and the current spoken languages. It owed its creation to a civil servant, Sir Charles Wilkins, who not only organized it but undertook the necessary manual work, cutting founts with his own hands; he was at once metallurgist, engraver, founder, and printer.<sup>1</sup> The first book printed at it was a Bengali grammar compiled by another civil servant, Halhed.<sup>2</sup> At a later period Sanskrit works were also printed at a press which an Indian from Upper India established in Calcutta at the instance of the Sanskrit scholar, Colebrooke.

Government naturally had its own press for official publications such as the Regulations. Private English presses began to spring up in Calcutta. In 1768 we find William Bolts sticking up notices in which he advertised for a printing-press on the ground that the want of one was of great disadvantage in business. He contemplated starting a newspaper, but his project came to nothing as he was deported during the same year. It was left to James Augustus Hicky to produce the first English newspaper in India. During the two years which he spent in a debtors' prison in Calcutta he came across a work on printing which gave him the idea of starting a newspaper. On his release from prison he cut types himself, printed handbills, and was able to save enough to buy printing materials from England, with which in 1780 he started a newspaper under the name of the *Bengal Gazette*. This consisted merely of two badly printed sheets, measuring twelve inches by eight, and its matter was as bad as its format, being vulgar, scurrilous, and full of personal abuse. It soon came to an untimely end, for its publication stopped in 1782, when Hicky was fined and sent to prison for a year for a libel on Warren Hastings, and his press was sold for payment of the fine. This newspaper was followed by others, which were not of a high order and had no large circulation.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. G. Smith wrote in *The Life of William Carey* that Wilkins had 'the imperishable honour thus chronicled by a contemporary poetaster:

"But he performed a yet more noble art,  
He gave to Asia typographic art'."

The poetaster overlooked the invention of printing by the Chinese and the pioneer work of the Portuguese missionaries in India.

<sup>2</sup> This was not actually the first work ever printed in Bengali. A catechism, a compendium of the Mysteries of the Faith, and a vocabulary in that language were published in Lisbon in 1743. J. J. A. Campos, *The History of the Portuguese in Bengal* (Calcutta, 1919), p. iv.



The Marquess Wellesley, incensed by their attacks, stigmatized them in 1801 as useless to literature and to the public, and dubiously profitable to the speculators who financed them, and bitterly said that they served only to maintain in needy indolence a few European adventurers who were unfit for any creditable means of livelihood.

Bombay was not many years behind Calcutta, for in 1780 a Parsi, Rustamji Keraaspji, set up an English press there, at which he printed a calendar for the year, which ran to thirty-four foolscap pages, while in 1789 the first English newspaper appeared, the *Bombay Herald*, which was followed next year by the *Bombay Courier*. The editor of the latter, being anxious to publish advertisements in the Gujarati language, employed a Gujarati to cut founts, and in 1797 began to publish advertisements in that language. An independent Gujarati press was set up in Bombay in 1812 by another Parsi, who cut the types himself and cast letters with the help of the women of his household.

The first private press printing in the colloquial languages of North India was started by the Baptist missionary, Dr. Carey, and his coadjutor William Ward, who had begun life as a compositor and had risen to the position of a newspaper editor. Carey had translated the New Testament into Bengali soon after 1793 and was anxious to print it, but found that the price asked by the presses in Calcutta, still only three or four in number, was prohibitive, viz. £4,400 for 10,000 unbound copies printed on country paper. In 1798, taking advantage of the opportunity afforded by a wooden printing-press in Calcutta being offered for sale, he bought it for £40, and took it away to Madnabati in the Malda district, where he was living. So unfamiliar were the villagers with any form of machinery that when it was set up there, they believed it to be an English idol. In 1800 it was reassembled at the new head-quarters of the Mission, Serampore, where Ward set up a letter foundry with the assistance of an Indian blacksmith. The latter had been trained by Sir Charles Wilkins and now trained others, who, it was claimed in 1807, cut matrices and cast type in different Indian languages with a degree of accuracy which would not have disgraced European artists. The New Testament in Bengali was published in 1801, the type being set up by Ward himself, and was followed by translations of the Bible, chiefly of the New Testament, in over three dozen different languages, including tongues, such as Pashtu, spoken by people over whom the British had not yet extended their dominion. It was a herculean task. Its immensity, considered merely from a typographical point of view, may be imagined from the fact that for the Oriya language it was necessary to cast an entirely new fount of type with about

300 different combinations, while that cast in the Devanagari character had nearly 1,000 different combinations of characters. Incidentally, the Serampore missionaries rendered another service by introducing, after long and patient experiments, a paper impervious to insects. The only paper hitherto available was sized with rice paste, and the first sheets of a book might be eaten by white ants or ruined by book-worms before the last sheets were printed off.

The printing of translations of the Bible and of missionary tracts was the main but not the only activity of the Serampore press. Original works were printed and published, the first being the life of a Bengali hero, Raja Pratapaditya, which Carey induced one of his pandits, Ram Basu, to write. This, the first prose work by an Indian to be printed in India, was produced with a utilitarian object, viz. to provide a book which the young civil servants studying Indian languages could read. In May 1801 Carey, who had been appointed a teacher in Bengali and Sanskrit at Fort William College, had not a single prose work he could use; by July of the same year the book was written and printed. Other works of wider appeal and more general popularity were translations of Sanskrit classics, which were printed a few years later, including the *Hitopadesa*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, and also the newspaper *Samachar Darpan*, which first appeared in 1818.

The Serampore press was the parent of smaller private presses started and managed by Indians, which it supplied with type. By 1820 four Bengali presses were in existence, but their output was small, judged by modern standards. Only twenty-seven books were produced by them up to that year, and the number of copies which had been printed within ten years did not exceed 15,000—a figure which shows how small was the public for which they catered. The tastes of the reading public may be gauged from an analysis of their contents made by John Clark Marshman.

"One was a treatise on law, one on astronomy, one on music, one on *materia medica*, two dictionaries, a satire on physicians, or rather empirics; two treatises on women—not over-chaste; one on the duties of men; one on the instruction of youth; and three describing the three kinds of men and women in the world. The rest were popular legends of the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon."

Much, however, was done to stimulate the production and sale of books for educational purposes by societies established for that express object, such as the Calcutta School Book Society, which was started in 1817, and the Bombay Native School Book Society, which began its operations in 1823. By 1838 printing and publication had become a well-established industry in the capital cities

<sup>1</sup> G. Smith, *Twelve Indian Statesmen* (1897), p. 235.



and a new class had come into existence—men who were able to make a living by the pen. In that year Sir Charles Trevelyan wrote:

'A good law of copyright, embracing the whole of British India, would now be of great use. The want has only lately begun to be felt. Nothing was to be made by works in manuscript; and printed books were not in sufficient demand to make the copyright of any value. Now however large editions of many works, both in English and the vernacular languages, are called for; and anxiety is felt by publishers on account of their liability to be deprived of their profits by piratical editions.'

In rural areas, however, books were still extremely rare. In the great district of Rajshahi with about a million inhabitants Mr. Adam found in 1836 that vernacular books were unknown; all that he came across were one missionary tract and one almanac, which had been brought there by some official or well-to-do Indian. Not a single schoolmaster had ever seen a printed book, and those which Mr. Adam distributed were looked on more as curiosities than as instruments of knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

The manuscript news-letters, known as *akhbars*, compiled by persons who prowled about the Courts of the princes and the law-courts, were still in circulation. It was estimated that there were twenty or thirty news-writers at Delhi alone, each with his clientele to whom he retailed the scandal of the Court and city, and the number of the manuscript gazettes which they sent out was calculated by well-informed persons at 120.<sup>3</sup> Macaulay, who mentioned these facts in a minute written in 1836,<sup>4</sup> was of the opinion that their influence must have been much more extensive than that of the printed vernacular papers, of which not more than 300 copies were circulated by post; incidentally, he noticed that the news-letters often contained abuse of the British government and satirical or sarcastic comments on the character and manners of the English. Greater publicity was probably obtained by other means such as that which is now known as the snowball letter. When, for instance, an unpopular house-tax was imposed on the inhabitants of Benares, the leading Brahmans sent out written handbills to the different quarters of the city and the adjoining

<sup>1</sup> *On the Education of the People of India* (1838), pp. 177-8.

<sup>2</sup> J. Long, *Adam's Report on Vernacular Education in Bengal and Behar* (1868), p. 97.

<sup>3</sup> According to Sir William Sleeman, who was Resident at Lucknow from 1849 to 1851, there were 660 news-writers employed by the King of Oudh, but these had an official position. v. *Journey through the Kingdom of Oude*, vol. 1, pp. 67-9.

<sup>4</sup> Later, in his *History of England*, Macaulay remarked that in 1685 the preparation of news-letters was a calling in London 'as it now is among the natives of India'.

villages, in which they called on all who loved their country and their creed to join in a general strike or *hartal* by way of protest or passive resistance, and commanded, under the penalty of bitter curses, every man who received one of them to hand it on to his neighbour.<sup>1</sup> A manuscript proclamation was transmitted to almost every village in South India by means of similar threats. It urged the people to rise and extirpate the British and ordered everyone who read it to circulate a copy among his friends, who again were to do the same among their friends. Imprecations were invoked on all who failed to do so; it was declared that they would commit as heinous a sin as a man who killed a cow on the banks of the Ganges and would be doomed to suffer all the tortures of hell.<sup>2</sup>

The products of the printing-press, books, newspapers, and publications of all kinds, have now found their way into every part of India, but they have not yet entirely replaced old methods of communication and publicity. Village bards recite their own compositions. In higher circles the public reading of their works by poets continued long after the appearance of the printed book and is still practised to some extent. In North India there is still an institution called the *mushaira*, which recalls the poetical contests of ancient Greece. It is a kind of symposium at which Urdu poets recite their verses and the audience shows its preference by acclamation and applause. This institution, it is said, is still fairly popular though it does not have the same vogue as formerly.

It is unnecessary to dwell on the value of printing as an instrument for the dissemination of knowledge and the intercourse of mind with mind. Such effects are common to other countries which have benefited by the art of printing and are part of general history. It is, moreover, difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between the results of printing and those produced by the diffusion of education; the two are complementary to each other. We may, however, briefly advert to some of the benefits accruing from the introduction of printing which were more or less peculiar to India and its special conditions. It rendered a service to literature by fixing and preserving the text of classical works. These were recited and often mutilated by itinerant bards, who made their own emendations of passages of which the meaning was obscure or beyond their comprehension; and it was the printing-press which, by reproducing the text from reliable manuscripts, made known the poets' own words. For living writers the sale of books and

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Heber, *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India* (1849), vol. I, p. 185.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in 1823 by Sir John Malcolm in a memorandum on the Press in India.



journalism<sup>1</sup> made literature a profession by which they could subsist; in an age of manuscripts no writer could live by the pen unless he had the support of a wealthy patron. It helped the cause of social and religious reform. Hitherto the ideals of reformers could only be made known by the peripatetic activities of men who went from city to city, from village to village, preaching their new doctrines. The Press made the pen mightier than the tongue and dispensed with personal efforts of this kind. Its possibilities were quickly realized by Raja Mohan Ray, who was the first Indian to make use of it for polemical purposes, purchasing a press for himself and issuing pamphlet after pamphlet in which he denounced the evils of Hinduism. Other leaders of thought followed his example; and the Press became a recognized vehicle first for religious and social, and later for political propaganda, and was largely responsible for the birth and growth of the nationalist movement.

Last, we may mention the service which printing rendered by spreading knowledge of Sanskrit works, which were the repository not only of the ancient literature of India but also of its religion and law and constituted the indisputable and final authority for social usages. Knowledge of Sanskrit did not, and could not, spread beyond the narrow circle of Brahmans.<sup>2</sup> The latter were in no way opposed to education in the spoken tongues, but Sanskrit learning was their exclusive privilege, in which the lower castes could not participate without the doom of damnation. In particular, the *Vedas* were holy ground which they alone could tread. Only a few manuscripts were in existence, and knowledge of them depended on oral transmission.

<sup>1</sup> We can hardly form an idea of the power wielded by the priests when they were the only depositaries of *Vedas* or *Bibles*, and when there was no possible appeal from what they laid down as the catholic faith. In India their position was stronger even than in Italy, because the priest did not read the *Veda* from MSS., but had to learn it entirely from oral transmission and teach it again to his pupils in the same way. No one therefore could contradict him except those who did not wish to contradict him.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Many literary writers were also journalists. For instance, the *Sambad Prabakar* was edited by Iswar Chandra Gupta, whose poems and satires on anglicizing tendencies were one of its most attractive features, and the *Tattwabodhini Patrika* by Akshay Kumar Datta, reprints of whose articles are standards of Bengali prose.

<sup>2</sup> Keshab Chandra Sen, who was born in 1838, said that in his boyhood: "The *Vedas* and *Upanishads* were sealed books. All that we knew of the immortal *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, or the *Bhagavad-gita* was from execrable translations into popular Bengali, which no respectable young man was supposed to read."

<sup>3</sup> Max Müller, *Biographical Essays* (1884), p. 10.

The Brahmans, however, had not reckoned on the printer and translator, who took away from them the key of learning and opened to outsiders the temple enshrining the *Vedas* and other scriptures, whose door had hitherto been barred to them. The immediate effect was seen in the controversy over suttee when the abolitionists were able to prove that these writings gave no sanction to it. This is not a single instance. It was found that Hinduism in its pristine form countenanced neither idolatry nor the caste system, neither purdah nor child marriage, and this revelation had wide repercussions. Although however study of the *Vedas* tended to destroy belief in their divine origin and infallible authority, they were still regarded as the depositaries of the national faith, and were used for the regeneration of Hinduism and the reform of its social structure. Nor is this all. High ethical conceptions have been popularized by the *Bhagavad-gita*, which has had a large part in moulding modern Hindu thought and in developing neo-Hinduism. This work, which was scarcely known outside the learned circle of the pandits a century ago, 'can now be bought for a few pice by any Hindu student, and commentaries, versions, and translations abound. Within the memory of educational missionaries still living, it has been elevated from a position of comparative obscurity to that of a common and well-read scripture for the whole of educated India.'<sup>1</sup>

In his *History of Europe* Dr. H. A. L. Fisher remarks that it is possible that two thousand years hence the two scientific inventions of steam and electricity may be regarded as constituting the Great Divide in human life. In the case of India it is not necessary to wait for a dim and distant future to evaluate the transformation which has been brought about by the products of applied science. In the early part of the nineteenth century India was still a country in which medieval conditions obtained both as regards transport and industrial organization. The Industrial Revolution which began in Great Britain towards the end of the eighteenth century had not extended to India, though it had begun to affect it. The textile manufactures produced in the Lancashire mills were already driving hand-made Indian goods out of the English market and were competing with them in the Indian market. In 1794 Jonathan Duncan noticed that dealers from the Deccan, the western provinces, and Nepal resorted to Mirzapur in search of European commodities.<sup>2</sup> Bishop Heber found shops in the remote city of Dacca full of English goods in 1824, and observed next year that English cotton cloths were in common wear in the even more remote State of Ajmer, where he learnt to his surprise that they

<sup>1</sup> C. F. Andrews, *The Renaissance in India* (1912), p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> Sir T. Morison, *The Economic Transition of India* (1911), p. 168.



could be bought best and cheapest, together with all kinds of hardware and crockery, at a market in Marwar on the edge of the desert, where till very recently no European was known to have penetrated.<sup>1</sup> Five years later the *Bengal Herald* referred to complaints that the Indian market had become glutted with English manufactures,<sup>2</sup> and Jacquemont noted that the manufacture of cotton stuffs was decreasing every year, English stuffs crushing the home-made fabrics by their low price. Saltpetre, exported to Europe and China, opium, almost all of which went to the latter country, and indigo were, he declared, all that manufacture offered to the speculator in India.<sup>3</sup>

Steam-driven machinery was still practically unknown in India. The first steam-engine appears to have been one which the Serampore missionaries imported from England in 1820 and set up in their paper-mill, which till then had been operated by a treadmill worked by relays of forty men. So little was known at this time of steam power that Europeans who had never before seen machinery worked by steam came to study and copy it, while crowds of Indians gathered and gaped at the 'machine of fire'.<sup>4</sup> Towards the end of the first half of the nineteenth century one of the Calcutta newspapers imported a steam press and duly advertised its enterprise, much to the chagrin of its rivals. They recovered from their discomfiture when they discovered, and duly announced in their columns, that the press was one which could be worked either by steam or by hand and that it was in fact worked by hand like the presses of all the other newspapers.

It was not till the second half of the nineteenth century that steam power, applied to transport and industry, began to make its mark on India, which received in a comparatively few years the benefits of inventions which had been separated by considerable intervals in Europe. Coming almost simultaneously, they had a cumulative effect on economic and social life which transcended that produced so far by either the printer or the schoolmaster or the politician. In a country where comparatively few are able to read and write, books and newspapers have a small circulation. Most cultivators' houses contain no printed or written matter except rent-receipts, documents relating to the family holding, and perhaps a copy of a judicial record of a case in which the cultivator has been a party. Great though the progress of education has been, it still affects only a minority of the population. Political movements have not

<sup>1</sup> *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India* (1849), vol. ii, pp. 51, 208.

<sup>2</sup> J. K. Mazumdar, *Indian Speeches and Documents on British Rule 1821-1918* (1937), p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> C. A. Phillips, *Letters from India; 1829-1832* (1936), p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> G. Smith, *Life of William Carey* (1909), p. 183.

touched on the everyday life of the masses to anything like the same extent as the reduction of the limitations of space and time by steamers, railways, the telegraph, the post, and, in recent years, the motor omnibus. Intercommunication between India and other parts of the world, and between different parts of the subcontinent, has revolutionized trade. The country has become more or less an interdependent whole, and much of its trade is international instead of merely local. Industrial conditions have been changed by the import of machine-made goods and by their manufacture in India itself. Agricultural economy has been largely transformed by the facilities for both overseas and internal commerce. The system of government, reinforced by the material appliances of modern civilization, the telegraph, the post, the railways, and the telephone, has become more centralized and has come into closer touch with the rural masses. A country which is handicapped by poor means of communication is rarely well governed in the modern sense of the word. So long as the activities of the State are limited by difficulties of distance and inaccessibility they can impinge only to a small extent on the social and economic life of the villages, and this was the case in India until the country was opened up by roads and railways.

Steamer communication with Europe was established long before the first sod was turned for a railway. The first voyage under steam was made in 1825 by the *Enterprise*, a small paddle steamer of under 500 tons with a speed of five to seven knots. Owing to the absence of coal depots the voyage from Falmouth to Calcutta round the Cape of Good Hope took 113 days, of which 40 were under sail. After this disappointing result attention was directed to the Red Sea route, steamers going from Bombay to Suez, where passengers disembarked and went, by what was called 'the overland route', to Alexandria, where they joined steamers going to England. Several experimental voyages made between 1830 and 1835 by the *Hugh Lindsay*, a steamer of 400 tons built at Bombay, proved that by this route London could be reached in 8 weeks. The Directors of the East India Company objected, however, to the conveyance of mails by the *Hugh Lindsay* on the ground of expense, and the matter had to be brought up in the House of Commons, which passed a resolution that expeditious communication by steam between England and India was a matter of national importance. The arrangements for transport across Egypt, made by Thomas Waghorn, and for taking the mails across France, reduced the time of transit, but even so letters and papers took 35 days to reach London from Bombay in 1838, and those from Calcutta 66 days, of which 5 were accounted for by the journey from Suez to Alexandria.



Regular communication by the new route was not established till 1843, when it was undertaken by the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, the familiar P. & O. It was chiefly of value for mail and passenger traffic and was not used as a trade-route owing to the cost and inconvenience caused by unloading at Suez, transport across Egypt, and reshipment at Alexandria. Except therefore for mails and a small class of valuable and easily portable articles, cargoes to and from India continued to be sent round the Cape of Good Hope until the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 reduced the duration of the voyage from about three months to one.

India had by this time come within the nexus of international trade, as was amply demonstrated during the course of the Crimean War (1853-5) and the American Civil War (1861-6), when two of its agricultural products, jute and cotton, came into prominence in the world market and its two main power-industries were started. There had been a demand for jute since 1832, when experimental work had proved that it could be used as a substitute for hemp. Jute mills were started at Dundee and the demand for the fibre grew as it became clear that it was the cheapest material for the manufacture of sacking. When the Crimean war stopped the supply of Russian hemp fibre, which had been the chief competitor of jute in the gunny market, the latter had a practical monopoly. In 1855 an enterprising Dundee manufacturer brought out some of his machinery and set up a jute mill on the banks of the Hooghly, and this was the beginning of a thriving industry which developed until it became the rival of Dundee. The American Civil War gave as great a stimulus to the cultivation of cotton and set the infant cotton-mill industry on its feet. Realizing the golden opportunities open to anyone who could supply the local market with cotton piece goods, an American, named Landon, established a mill at Broach, and a little later (in 1854) a Parsi started another in Bombay. By 1861 nine more had been set up and the industry extended from Bombay to Ahmadabad. As soon as the war broke out, and the supply of raw cotton from the United States was cut off, England clamoured for Indian cotton.<sup>1</sup> Cultivation expanded, prices rose to giddy heights, and the exports of cotton, which before the war had averaged 30 million rupees a year, rose in 1866 to 370 million rupees. The effects of the war were felt in a number of other directions. The

<sup>1</sup> Indian cotton had hitherto had a bad reputation for quality. John Bright tells us in one of his speeches that, at a time when cotton was scarce and hundreds of mills in Lancashire were working short time, and many had closed altogether, a minister at a prayer-meeting prayed for a supply of cotton, and a man 'with a keen sense of what he had suffered, in response exclaimed "O Lord! but not Surat" '.

first roads fit for wheeled traffic were made in the Deccan, and Bombay itself was largely rebuilt. The boom years, when money poured into that city,<sup>1</sup> led to wild speculation, bubble company after bubble company being started. The inevitable crash came with the slump which followed the restoration of peace and the resumption of the American export trade. Prices fell as sharply as they had risen, the share mania came to an abrupt end, and the trade in cotton contracted; but in the meantime the mill-industry had been firmly established.

Inland steam navigation was initiated in 1828, when Lord William Bentinck sent up the Ganges from Calcutta a small paddle steamer which had been built there and which was fitted with engines of only 25 horse-power imported from England. This was the precursor of a regular service plying between Calcutta and Allahabad, which carried freight and passengers. It was expensive, slow, and for many years infrequent. It cost as much to send goods from one of these cities to the other as it did from Calcutta to London, and as the steamers ran only during the daytime and pulled into the bank at night, the journey upstream took on the average 25 days. This, however, was a great saving of time compared with the boat journey, which took 2½ months. Steamer services were extended to the other two great river highways, the Indus and the Brahmaputra; but the railway eventually absorbed the traffic on the former river as well as that which made use of the steamers running on the Ganges between Calcutta and the north-west of India. In the absence of railway competition the steamer flotillas were able to hold their own on the Brahmaputra, which is navigable for 800 miles from the sea to Dibrugarh and is a main artery of commerce in the north-east of India. They opened up Assam, where formerly even the mails had been conveyed by canoes, and they were largely instrumental in developing its tea gardens, whose labour and machinery they brought in and whose produce they took away for export overseas.

The greater part of the country away from the river highways was without adequate means of communication until railways were built. A certain number of roads had been maintained in the pre-British period between the main centres of population; but they were merely fair-weather tracks, on which, owing to the absence of metalling and the paucity of bridges, wheeled traffic was practicable only during the dry season. They were, moreover, built only in the level plains and did not cross hilly country, where there were only rough tracks, up which coolies, pack-ponies, and pack

<sup>1</sup> It is said that cotton growers shod their bullocks with silver and put silver tyres on the wheels of their carts. The story at least serves to indicate the sudden access of unusual wealth.



bullocks clambered with their loads and down which they slithered in the rainy season. For over half a century after the establishment of its rule the East India Company did little more than previous rulers to open up the country by means of roads which could be used throughout the year; but it must be remembered that even England did not have a proper road system until after 1815, when John Macadam began to put his ideas into practice. It was not till the last thirty years of its existence that the Company devoted its attention to making roads going over hill and dale and passable throughout the year; one of its first efforts was the construction in 1830 of the road from Bombay to Poona, which scaled the Western Ghats. The idea of providing great trunk roads for wheeled traffic was scarcely entertained before 1839, when it was decided to have a continuous road from Calcutta to Delhi, which would link up various sections already in existence, and be metalled, but not bridged, throughout; bridges were built only across the smaller rivers and streams, and the larger rivers had to be crossed by ferries or pontoons. This was the Grand Trunk Road, the construction of which over a distance of 1,000 miles was no mean achievement. Other great trunk roads which owed their existence to the Company were those from Madras to Bombay and from Bombay to Agra, 800 and 900 miles long respectively; besides which a number of metalled roads were built between 1843 and 1853 to connect the cities and principal towns.

Inland tracts not served by the main roads were practically roadless; the remarks made in 1837 by the Collector of one district within thirty miles of the seat of government in Calcutta would apply to nearly all at that time.

'I am sorry to say that with the exception of the great lines of communication which are kept up by government, and which by the way are frequently in a wretched state, no provision whatever exists for making and repairing roads or bridges in the interior of the district. There is not a single road in the district which a European vehicle could traverse, while the number passable for hackeries in the rains are lamentably few.'

Transport in some rural areas depended almost entirely on pack animals and human labour. In 1857, in a district of Bihar, covering nearly 5,000 square miles, it was impossible to comply with the requisitions of the army for carts, as there were none to be had, and the officer in charge had consequently to have them specially made. Of Oudh, Sir George Campbell, who was its Judicial Commissioner from 1858 to 1862, wrote:

'The want of means of transport is very remarkable. Though the soil

<sup>1</sup> *Hooghly District Gazetteer* (Calcutta, 1912), p. 195. Hackery was the name for a bullock-cart.

is decidedly favourable for native roads, there are none whatever, not even the cart tracks so common elsewhere. Indeed, there are scarcely any carts and none whatever fit for mercantile purposes. I am told that before the Mutiny there were not fifty carts in all Southern Oudh. The traffic was all by Brinjarah bullocks, ponies, and coolies.<sup>1</sup>

As late as 1843, the only part of the Grand Trunk Road in the north-west which was metalled and suitable for wheeled traffic throughout the year was that between Allahabad and Cawnpore. A young civil servant, going to join his station, took a month to reach Delhi from Calcutta, even though he travelled every night and the greater part of each day. He used a palanquin for the whole journey. This was carried by coolies as far as Allahabad; there it was put on a truck drawn by horses, which took it to Cawnpore; from Cawnpore to Delhi it was again carried by coolies. A few years later some ingenious person invented what was called an equirotal carriage. This was merely a palanquin fitted with four equal wheels (whence the name) and propelled by coolies. It gave place in its turn to the *dak gari* or mail-carriage, drawn by relays of horses, which marked a great advance, as it dispensed with human labour as a motive force.

The provision of coolies for travellers was one of the functions of the Post Office Department, which supplied sets of bearers for each stage of a journey. Rapidity of travel was impossible without some such organization, for each set of bearers consisted of ten to fourteen men, so that a journey of even 100 miles required the services of at least a thousand; considering the number of men required, the expense of travelling was not unreasonable, eight annas a mile being charged. No private person had sufficient enterprise to supply the needs of travellers. Government was the only regular carrier in the country, and no one could make a long journey except with government establishments or by the agency of a government officer. The postal system was still in its infancy in 1836, when there were only 276 post offices in all India, viz, 110 in Bengal, 117 in Madras, and 49 in Bombay; but, so far as it went, it was well organized. Its defect was want of uniformity, each Presidency making its own internal arrangements and having its own rates of postage. The result, as stated in a report submitted in 1836 by the Customs and Post Office Committee, was three separate coexisting systems in which hardly any two items assimilated, from the mode of travelling or the scale of postage to the mode of collecting it or the control of the accounts.<sup>2</sup> The mails

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of my Indian Career* (1893), vol. ii, p. 32. Brinjaras were the carriers of the country who went from place to place with caravans of pack animals.

<sup>2</sup> 'Early Days of Postal Administration in India', *Bengal Past and Present* (Calcutta, 1921), p. 161.



were carried by relays of runners in stages varying in length from 8 to 11 miles according to local circumstances. An attempt had been made in the United Provinces to use the light springless carts called *ekkas*, but they failed entirely in the rains, and the only horse-drawn mail was on the road from Bombay to Poona. The speed of the runners did not exceed 4 to 4½ miles an hour in Bengal and Madras, and was only 2½ to 3½ miles in Bombay. Special arrangements were made for the more speedy transit of letters, by means of what was called an Express, but its use was confined to government officers and to occasions when the exigencies of public service demanded unusual dispatch, except in Bengal, where private persons could take advantage of it on payment at the rate of 4 annas a mile. Even an Express did not go faster than 5½ miles an hour, and it took nearly 11 days for a letter to go from Bombay to Calcutta and 7½ days from Calcutta to Madras. The rates of inland letter postage were different in each Presidency and varied according to distances, the minima being 2 annas for 30 miles in Bombay, 1 anna for 15 miles in Madras, and 2 annas for 50 miles in Bengal. On some of the main roads there was a separate post called 'the *Banghy*'<sup>1</sup> for the conveyance of parcels and packages at lower rates than those of the letter post (*dak* or *dawk*); its speed was as a rule only 2½ miles an hour. The only combined letter and parcel post, which was known as 'the *Dak Banghy*', was on one route in Madras.

It is somewhat remarkable that the modern postal system, electric telegraphy, and railways should have been introduced almost simultaneously. The postal system was reformed in 1854, when unity of control was secured, postage stamps were substituted for cash payments, and a uniform minimum rate of half an anna for each letter was fixed without reference to the distance it had to be carried. The posts, however, were still slow and infrequent till the extension of railways ensured speed of conveyance and frequency of dispatch. The parcel post and the cash-on-delivery (known in India as value-payable or V.P.) system were introduced in 1877, the latter supplying a real need in a country where large shopping centres are comparatively few and long distances apart. The post office next adopted the money-order system, which has a popularity due to special causes, viz. the rarity of banks and the prevalence of periodic migration, i.e. the migration for periods of varying length of workers, who use this means of remitting money to their homes during their absence. The postal system has grown into an organization of huge dimensions. The value of money orders aggregates forty millions of rupees annually,

<sup>1</sup> So named after the *bahangi* or *bangi*, a pole resting on one shoulder from either end of which packages are suspended.

while the number of articles passing through the post is over one thousand million. Large as the latter figure is, it represents only about four per head of the population, which is mostly illiterate, and there is only one letter box for every 20 square miles and one post office for every 63 square miles.

The first telegraph line, which ran from Calcutta to Agra, a distance of 800 miles, was opened in 1854, and next year lines were working over 3,000 miles, from Calcutta to Attock, from Agra to Bombay, and from Bombay to Madras. The system has since expanded rapidly, and India is now girdled with lines extending for more than 100,000 miles and dealing with seventeen million telegrams a year. The effect of the postal and telegraph systems on commercial and social life requires no exegesis; even though the majority of the people can neither read nor write, they can get letters and telegrams written for them and read out to them, so that illiteracy is no bar to their use. The cheapness and certainty of the post in particular have not been without a psychological effect on the people, whose reaction to it has been one of admiring wonder;<sup>1</sup> indeed, it was regarded as one of the greatest modern wonders until recent years, when the capacity for wonder has become satiated by fresh triumphs of inventive genius following in quick succession.

The progress of railways was much slower. Proposals for their construction had been made to the East India Company in 1844, but the Directors thought them a doubtful proposition on account of climatic difficulties, the want of qualified engineers, and doubts as to financial success. One objection which was raised was that railways would not pay, as Hindus would be debarred by caste scruples from making use of them. Even such an authority as Horace Hayman Wilson thought this a serious hindrance to their popularity, but John Clark Marshman obtained a ruling from the body of orthodox opinion represented by the *Dharma Sabha* of Calcutta to the effect that a pilgrim could travel by railway without losing the merit of pilgrimage. All that the Directors would sanction was the construction of experimental lines radiating from the capitals of the Presidencies, viz. from Calcutta to Raniganj, a distance of 120 miles, from Bombay to Kalyan (33 miles), and from Madras to Arkonam (39 miles). The Directors were made to see reason by the masterly minute written by Lord Dalhousie in 1853,

<sup>1</sup> Another psychological effect may be mentioned on account of its curious nature. When Sir Monier Monier-Williams was in India in 1876, he was solemnly told by a Pandit that ghosts had become much less common because communication had become so rapid that few persons died without their relatives receiving news of their deaths and so being enabled to perform the rites without which their spirits would become foul wandering ghosts. *Modern India and the Indians* (1879), p. 104.



which proved beyond doubt the need of railways as national works and the advantages which would accrue from them. In the same year the first train ran from Bombay to Thana, a distance of 21 miles, at the speed of 24 miles an hour, and by the end of 1855 about 200 miles were open to traffic. Even in so short a time the apprehension that railway travel was incompatible with caste prejudices was shown to be groundless, the number of passengers being already nearly  $1\frac{1}{2}$  millions. The commercial success of the railways was also assured; by 1869, when 4,000 miles were open, the value of the foreign trade was thrice what it had been in the pre-railway years. All the lines so far were built by private companies, the official view being that commercial undertakings were not within the province of government, and that it was necessary to encourage British enterprise and attract British capital. A new policy was initiated by Lord Mayo (1868-72), who started a system of State railways which by 1880 had added nearly 3,000 more miles of rail. The total, however, was under 9,000 miles; the system was largely designed to provide access to seaports and to link together strategical centres; and the experience of some years of famine had shown that the lines so far laid were insufficient to prevent and relieve distress. Construction by private companies was then resumed and there was steady development, but railway communications did not really become widespread till the last decade of the nineteenth century. In 1891 there was still only one mile of railway to every 90 square miles of area. Now there is a network of lines, having a total length of 43,000 miles, representing one mile of railway to every 25 square miles, and carrying 600 million passengers and 90 million tons of goods a year. So far as mileage is concerned India is the third railway country in the world, and a recent official report expresses the opinion that 'in general, railway development may have reached a stage approaching saturation for existing conditions of agriculture'.<sup>1</sup>

Road development proceeded *pari passu* with railway development, progress being stimulated by the need of feeder roads with an articulated network of connecting roads; the aggregate in 1935-6 was a little over 300,000 miles (82,000 metalled and 224,000 unmetalled). The railways supplemented by the road system have amply fulfilled the expectation of Lord Dalhousie that they would give rise to the same encouragement of enterprise, the same discovery of latent forces, and the same increase of national wealth that marked the introduction of improved and extended communications in the western world. They have done more than this owing to the peculiar conditions of India, its vast distances, and the

<sup>1</sup> K. G. Mitchell and L. H. Kirkness, *Report on the Present State of Road and Railway Competition* (Calcutta, 1933), p. 73.

isolated and undeveloped state of many parts of its wide territories in pre-railway days. Not only have widely separated tracts been brought into contact, but areas which were almost *terra incognita* have been opened up. The country south-west of Bengal was marked in Rennell's survey map of 1779 as 'impenetrable'. In the Central Provinces there were vast stretches of hill and forest, inhabited by primitive tribes, with an oasis of cultivation here and there, which were quite unexplored and a fruitful source of wild tales. Some forests were believed to be inhabited by wild men of the woods who lived in trees; one tribe was said to hunt for strangers in order to sacrifice them to their gods; another was credited with killing old people who were no longer able to work and with eating their flesh—a myth apparently due to their having a *penchant* for eating monkeys. Even as late as 1853 a large part of the Central Provinces was still a blank on the maps. The province of Orissa was almost as inaccessible. In 1869 it was stated that, unless he could obtain a special steamer, an officer of government had to make his way there as slowly and as tediously as in the days of Asoka; and though conditions improved with the construction of roads, the province had no railway communication with either Madras on the south or Bengal on the north until 1899.

Migration has been stimulated and population attracted to undeveloped tracts, particularly Assam; there about one-sixth of the population consists of immigrants and their descendants living on or near the gardens which were made by their labour. Throughout the country labour, no longer tied to the villages, has acquired mobility and has been drawn to manufacturing centres and to large industrial undertakings, such as jute and cotton mills, coal and other mines, &c. It is owing to the railways that India has passed from a simple agricultural state to one in which organized industries have their part in economic life. Transport is the key of progressive industry, but whereas in England, when the industrial revolution began, improvements in transport were due to industrial expansion, in India the reverse was the case, for industrial development was the direct consequence of the railways, which brought the machinery necessary for the establishment of power industries, the labour force required for their working, and the coal which supplied motive power. A coal-mine was opened at Raniganj in 1820, but coal-mining itself did little more than supply local needs until after 1854 when the coal-field was tapped by the railways. It then steadily developed into a large industry in response to the demand created by modern processes of manufacture as well as by the railways' own large consumption. On the other hand, the railways, by distributing far and wide the manufactures of power industries, accelerated the decay



of indigenous handicrafts relying on hereditary skill and simple hand-made appliances, whose products were displaced to a large extent, though not entirely, by the machine-made goods of mass production. This process, however, had been in progress long before a railway train was seen, and during the twentieth century the progressive decline of hand industries, especially weaving, has been checked to some extent, largely owing to the measures taken by provincial governments to foster and develop them.

The benefit of the changes brought about in agricultural economy are perhaps more marked and less dubious. Facilities for the transport and sale of produce have led to an extension of cultivation and the growth of a greater variety of crops. Good communications, more than anything else, by bringing the cultivators into touch with markets, have put an end to mere 'subsistence farming', i.e. the raising of crops for food alone, and have enabled them to devote their energy to commercial or money crops such as cotton, jute, sugar, and tobacco. Produce is brought to distant markets, where it is in demand, and producers are no longer tied to local markets or at the mercy of local dealers. Railways and steamers have extended the influence of world prices to the remotest villages and have put an end to the extraordinary fluctuations of prices, from season to season and place to place, which were common when there was only a local demand and a local supply. In areas with scanty crops prices soared and were not brought down by imports from outside. Areas might be teeming with produce which was unsaleable simply because markets in the locality were glutted and there were no means of conveying it to more distant markets. Cultivators with bumper crops were not infrequently unable to pay their rents for want of purchasers. Surplus produce was left to rot, and there was the paradox of distress in the midst of plenty. Prices have now been levelled and the country has become an interdependent whole, in which the currents of trade flow along the roads and railways with a rapidity and regularity which counteract the effects of regional variations and seasonal vicissitudes.

It is scarcely necessary to dilate on the general aspects of increased intercourse, multiplied contacts, and wider knowledge due to railway travel, but reference must be made to the part railways have played in the unification of India. The process of state-building is largely governed by conditions of space, and modern means of transport are favourable to large political unions. 'Railways', wrote Sir Edwin Arnold in 1865, 'may do for India what dynasties have never done . . . they may make India a nation;'<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> *The Marquess of Dalhousie's Administration of British India* (1865), vol. ii, pp. 241-2.

they have certainly been a means of enabling central representative institutions to be established. Sir Charles Wood, in introducing the Indian Councils Act of 1861 in the House of Commons, at a time when few parts of India were connected by rail, summarily dismissed the idea of a central representative legislature as absolutely impossible on account of its vast area. Persons representative of various classes could not possibly be assembled at any one place. It might be possible in a smaller territory like Ceylon, 'but with the extended area with which we have to deal in India, it would be physically impossible to constitute such a body. . . . To talk of a native representation is to talk of that which is simply and utterly impossible.'

Beneficial as the results of multiplied contacts have been, it must be pointed out that they have had repercussions of a destructive nature on the social organization, which is regretted by those Indians who cling to the ideal of a static society. The equilibrium of the village community has been impaired by the change in the position of village servants due to migration to places where labour is in demand. The joint-family tends to break up as individual members leave their ancestral homes and set up in independent business. Excommunication from caste has no longer the same terrors now that men can move elsewhere and make a living. Caste prejudices have been weakened, as the old ideas of impurity being caused by physical contact with persons of lower caste have been abandoned so far as railway journeys are concerned, though the effect of this should not be over-estimated as the dispensation from caste rules in this respect is only temporary and occasional. Hinduism as a religious force, however, appears to have obtained fresh strength owing to the facilities for pilgrimages; thousands now flock to places of pilgrimage, where only hundreds or scores went in pre-railway days. Apart, moreover, from the speed and convenience of trains, the railway companies have helped to popularize the pilgrim spirit by modern methods of advertisement; a few years ago a special pilgrim train was started in which pilgrims lived while they made a tour round pilgrim centres in different parts of India. In the case of Muslims, railways and steamers have rendered ancillary service to religion by facilitating the pilgrimage to Mecca, and, with improved means of correspondence and communication, there are greater contacts both between Muslims in different parts of India and between them and their co-religionists in more western countries. Railways, steamers, the post, and the telegraph have drawn them closer together and Islam has gained solidarity.

The facilities of transport afforded by a network of roads and railways have also solved one of the crucial problems of Indian



famine, by enabling areas of scarcity to draw upon the areas of plenty. The supply of food to areas threatened with, or suffering from, famine presented insuperable difficulties so long as there were no adequate means of transport and pack-animals and bullock-carts were the only carriers. The importation of millions of tons of food was beyond their capacity, and transport was paralysed when local cattle died in hundreds of thousands for want of fodder, when there was scarcely a blade of grass growing on the land or a leaf on the trees, and when imported cattle could only be kept alive by being fed from the loads which they drew or carried.

Distribution is one of the problems of Indian famines. Another is unemployment, for in time of famine agricultural life is suspended. There are no crops to be harvested, no grain to be winnowed, no produce to be exported. The greater part of the population loses its means of livelihood and is thrown out of employment. This problem has been solved by the provision of relief works by government. The third problem is that of the prevention of famine by means of irrigation works in areas in which crops are precarious and liable to failure owing to rainfall being either short or capricious; the times at which rain is precipitated are almost as vital as its quantity. This problem has been solved by the irrigation engineer working on scientific lines and employing the resources of modern mechanical science.

Artificial irrigation was no novelty, but had been in practice from early ages. Advantage was taken of the natural slope of the country to impound water by means of dams built across valleys or in the beds of rivers, from which it was conducted by channels leading to the fields below. The reservoirs so formed, which are known by the equally unimpressive and unexpressive name of tanks, are of all sizes, some being capable of irrigating only a few acres, while others are great sheets of water resembling natural lakes, a counterpart of which may be seen in the storage reservoirs of the Birmingham waterworks in the Elan valley. They are especially numerous in South India; it is estimated that there are 40,000 in Madras and nearly as many in Mysore, where a chain of them may be seen in almost every valley. They are known to have been in existence for many centuries; an inscription in Kathiawar refers to one which was built in the third century B.C. and repaired in A.D. 150, after which it was in working order for 300 years more, when it again had to be reconstructed. Other inscriptions attest the activity of different dynasties between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, such as the Cholas in South India, the Pawars in Malwa, and the Chandels in Bundelkhand. A few of the major works still survive and serve the purpose for which they were designed; there

is, for example, one ancient tank in Madras, which extends over 35 square miles and has a dam 12 miles long; but most fell into neglect and disrepair. As remarked by Mr. W. H. Moreland and Sir Atul Chatterjee in their *Short History of India*, 'it is easy to be critical of the failures of the past and expatiate on the enormous waste evidenced by the surviving ruins of such works; it is perhaps more profitable to recall that long before the days of scientific engineering such a dam might remain serviceable for as many as four centuries'. The chief monuments of the Muslim rulers were buildings erected for the worship of God and the service of travellers, such as mosques and caravanserais, and of works of less public utility such as palaces and tombs. Comparatively little was done for the protection of the country against scarcity or famine by means of irrigation works; but in the fourteenth century Firoz Shah Tughlak had a canal, 150 miles long, built from the river Jamuna to his domains in Hissar. This was reopened in Akbar's reign, by which time it had silted up; and another canal was taken from the Jamuna to Delhi in the reign of Shah Jahan with the primary object of watering his gardens. No provision, however, was made for maintenance and in the course of time both canals silted up and ceased to be of any practical use. Some small canals in the Punjab were also constructed during the period of Sikh rule and were in working order when the province was annexed in 1849.

One of the first steps which had to be taken by the British irrigation engineer was the restoration, remodelling, and extension of derelict works which suffered from faulty alinement and the absence of a system of distributary canals. Original works were next taken in hand designed on a scale of which India had no previous knowledge. It is not necessary to enter into details of the different systems but some idea may be given of the magnitude of the triumphs which engineering skill achieved. The Grand Anicut, which was built in 1835-6 across the bed of the Cauvery, the first British irrigation work in South India, has a length of over 2 miles. Of the Ganges canal, the first great work in North India, Lord Dalhousie proudly wrote in 1856 that there was not a single canal in Europe of half its magnitude and that it was a work unequalled in its class and character among the efforts of civilized nations. A tunnel over a mile long has been blasted and drilled through the Western Ghats; another, 2 miles long, pierces the Malakand range. The main and distributary canals of the Godavari system stretch for 2,500 miles; those of the Upper and Lower Ganges canals for nearly 8,000 miles, and they irrigate  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million acres. The Chenab canal has a discharge about six times as great as that of the Thames at Teddington; the Sukkur barrage is the largest



of its kind in the world; some of the canals in Sind are wider than the Suez Canal. In the Punjab alone the area served by State irrigation works is nearly double that irrigated in Egypt. In British India as a whole it is  $32\frac{1}{2}$  million acres or one-eighth of the total cultivated area.

Mere figures, however astronomical, fail to give any real idea of the change which has been made in the lives of millions who have been relieved from the haunting fear of scarcity and the periodical calamity of famine. The canals have not been an unmixed blessing, as in some cases they have caused water-logging of the soil which leads to a saline efflorescence resulting in deterioration of the land and also to an extension of the ravages of malaria, as the stagnant sheets of water which they spread over the soil are a fertile breeding ground for the anopheles mosquito. Even the most rabid anti-British politician, however, admits, with reluctance it may be, but with all sincerity, the benefits accruing from the State irrigation works in producing greater fertility, an assured succession of harvests as well as a greater variety of crops, and a source of supply for less favoured tracts.

Two special features of the irrigation system may be briefly adverted to. One is the unique work done by the Swat canal in the North-West Frontier Province, which was constructed with a political object, viz. the pacification of the Mohmands and other tribes, and which has proved its value as an instrument of peace, wild raiders having settled down as peaceful agriculturists in the area within its range. The other is the work which canals have done in peopling the wastes. For many years attention was concentrated on the protection of areas which were already well populated and which naturally had a prior claim for the fertilizing streams on which their welfare depended. Since 1892 irrigation has been extended to tracts which had a scanty population or none at all, and has become to an increasing extent what may be called 'desert irrigation'. The two provinces which have benefited are Sind and the Punjab, where the soil consists of a fine alluvium, deposited by the Indus and other rivers, which without water is a desert and with water develops into a rich mould. The irrigation schemes in Sind are of recent origin; here the Sukkur barrage, opened in 1932, is designed for the irrigation and consequent reclamation of some three million acres of waste land. In the Punjab reclamation has been in progress since 1892, and canal irrigation has converted desolate wastes into regions of rich fertility. The Punjab, when first annexed, is said to have been agriculturally in much the same condition as Alexander found it two thousand years before. There was no irrigation except in low riverain lands, where it did not amount to over 300,000 acres; elsewhere the crops

depended on the uncertain rains of heaven, and higher lands away from the rivers were arid wastes. As a result of canal irrigation wide stretches of country, in which there was scarcely any vegetation but thorny scrub, have been turned into well-cultivated fields, whose crops have made the Punjab the wheat granary of North India. Towns and villages extend over tracts where formerly a few nomad graziers wandered with their cattle, and emigration to the newly developed lands has relieved the pressure on the soil in congested districts. Progress has resembled that of the Australian colonies in their earlier days, though the extent of country is very much smaller, the Chenab colony for instance being only as large as Kent, Surrey, and Middlesex combined. Colonization has, moreover, been conducted on different lines from those followed in Australia, for it has been controlled and systematized by government from the outset. The land being Crown land with few inhabitants, government had a free hand to arrange for its settlement and development. The work of the engineers having been completed, civil officers were called in to organize 'canal colonies', as they are called, and everything was done according to plan, such as the location and layout of towns and villages, the alinement of the roads which served them, the apportionment of farms among cultivators, and the settlement of other constituent elements of the population such as traders and artisans.

A new development of the irrigation system is the Ganges Canal hydro-electric scheme in the United Provinces, of which the power stations were opened towards the end of 1937. This supplies power both for agricultural and industrial purposes. It protects  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million acres against famine; it provides 88 towns with power for electric lighting, electric fans, and industrial undertakings; and it assists rural development by mechanizing agricultural processes and energizing industrial activities by means of the cheap power provided for local sugar-mills, oil-crushing plants, flour-mills, &c. By substituting electric power for manual and animal labour, the electric grid is transforming the social economy of the area which it serves. Flour used to be ground by hand; sugar-cane was crushed by primitive stone crushers operated by bullocks going slowly round and round in a circle; the water required for irrigating the fields was raised from wells, tanks, and ditches by bullocks pulling it up in leather bags or men swinging it up in baskets. These operations are now performed by electricity, and the labour of millions of hands has been released for more profitable work.

There are a number of hydro-electric works in other parts of India which generate electricity for the lighting of cities, towns, and villages and for the motive power of mills and factories. One of the earliest was installed in Mysore, where the Cauvery scheme



supplies power for the Kolar gold fields and for lighting the cities of Mysore and Bangalore. Of others mention may be made of the Pykara scheme in Madras, which serves various towns and villages, tea gardens and coffee plantations, besides village industries, and of the Mandi scheme in the Punjab, which supplies Lahore and fifteen other towns with power for railway workshops, weaving and spinning mills, flour-mills, and hosiery plant.

The motor age is now beginning to follow the railway age, and transport operated by the internal-combustion engine is penetrating to places outside the range of railways. It is so far in an early stage of development: it is estimated that there are 175,000 motor vehicles to 10 million bullock carts. Private cars are beyond the means of all but a comparatively small well-to-do class, and the majority are dependent on motor omnibus services, of which there were few in existence before 1925-6. They have multiplied with great rapidity since then; and though they are only sufficient to meet the demand in some parts, such as Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, they are more than sufficient in others, such as the Punjab and the United Provinces; there are, for instance, so many motor omnibuses plying between Lahore and Amritsar that if they ran at regular intervals (which they do not), they could provide a five-minute service. Most of the proprietors are men of small means, owner-drivers and others who have little or no capital, and who have been induced to buy and set up in business by speciously attractive terms of hire purchase. The omnibuses are often ramshackle affairs, rattle-traps wanting in comfort and convenience, in which a tattered curtain may serve the purpose of purdah. Few of the services are well organized, running to fixed schedules, and there is much overcrowding, but their speed, their cheap fares, and the advantages of door-to-door travel ensure their popularity. They are in fact becoming the poor man's carriage, and on the routes which they use are replacing the slower means of conveyance previously in use, such as bullock-carts, *ekkas*, and *tongas*.

Most have a short-distance range extending from one to fifty miles, but there are some services in operation between places fifty to one hundred miles, and even longer distances, apart. The general tendency has naturally been for them to concentrate on inter-urban routes, where most traffic offers, and on some roads they have rendered a public service by connecting towns and villages which were not served by the railway. In many areas they have entered into competition with the latter; in the Bombay Presidency over four million passengers a year are already carried by motor omnibuses in the area served by the Great Indian Peninsular Railway. Less has been done to open up new routes, but this seems bound to follow as there is a growing demand for road

improvement which will enable motor transport to reach outlying areas. The motor omnibus is, however, already a familiar sight in the countryside, and it is difficult to realize that it was not many years ago when the first motor-car seen in Mekran was regarded as a strange and fearful beast of burden for which the simple but hospitable people brought out fodder.

It cannot be said that motor transport has up to the present made an appreciable difference in commercial conditions, for the carriage of goods by lorries has not developed to any very great extent. The traffic is mostly passenger traffic, and it is not altogether easy to estimate its effects. It may be said to have affected the mentality of the people to some extent; as one man observed: 'Instead of counting by miles we begin to count by time. Twenty to thirty miles is now an hour's distance.'<sup>1</sup> It certainly seems to be assisting in rural awakening by bringing the villages more into touch with the towns and with the social and political developments of the rest of the country. Villagers now make use of the motor-bus in growing numbers to go into the cities and towns, where they come into contact with a more active life and receive new stimuli. The circle of their interests and knowledge is widened, if only by going to the cinemas (in towns large enough to have them), and they carry back new ideas to their homes. The peasant in villages served by the motor-bus is a different being from his sessile forefather, who remained in his village year in and year out except for excursions to neighbouring markets. As remarked by Mr. Basil Mathews in *India Reveals Herself* (1937): 'The bus is outstripping the train as a carrier of ferment into the peasant life of India. As the millions of Indian rats carry plague, so the thousands and thousands of buses, always crammed with passengers, and carrying them from the villages to the city and back, carry the virus of modernism.'

Although the extension of railways, roads, and motor-bus services has to a great extent broken down the isolation of the villages, the majority are still unconnected by either a railway or a metalled road, and the slow-moving bullock-cart is still the only means of transport. As was formerly the case in Great Britain, towns and rural areas have few contacts, and social life in the latter is intensely local. Villages away from the main roads are little affected by outside influences and maintain much of their traditional routine. Of this a vivid picture is given in the *Statement Exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress of India during the year 1930-1*:

'Even now, despite the remarkable improvements in communications which have taken place, only a small proportion of the villages have

<sup>1</sup> K. G. Mitchell and L. H. Kirkness, *Report on the Present Stage of Road and Railway Competition* (Calcutta, 1933), p. 83.



either railways or metalled roads within several miles of them, and the rest must be approached by rough cart-tracks or winding pathways between the fields, of which the former alone can afford passage to bullock-wagons and such other wheeled traffic as there may be during the season when floods do not interrupt them. Thus, many millions of Indian villagers are, according to western standards, extremely isolated and remote from the events of the world at large. Those that happen to be situated within a few miles of towns, or railways, or good roads, are in a position to widen their outlook and acquaint themselves with larger happenings than those which village society provides, and can also market their surplus produce for consumption either in urban India or abroad; but the others are still to a great extent self-sufficing, both economically and culturally. . . . Throughout the greater part of the country the typical self-contained Indian village community, which has been maintained unmodified for centuries, still exists—an interesting and surprisingly intricate social organism, in many ways resembling the characteristic rural unit of which we read in histories of medieval Europe, and containing its landholders and tenants and agricultural labourers, its priest and its religious mendicant, its money-lender, and a whole order of artisans—the carpenter, the blacksmith, and the weaver, the potter and the oil-presser—each with his clearly prescribed functions hallowed by centuries of tradition.

The development of aviation, the latest and swiftest form of mechanical transport, has up to the present been more calculated to strike the imagination of the people of India than to affect their lives. During recent years air traffic has developed rapidly on routes to and from India, which is now in touch with the rest of the world by means of such services as Imperial Airways of Great Britain, the K.L.M., and the Air Company of France. Besides the trans-continental lines, there are some internal air lines of which the principal act as feeders to the main air route between India and Great Britain, viz. between Karachi and Lahore, between Karachi and Madras, between Bombay and Delhi (via Indore, Bhopal, and Gwalior), between Delhi and Lahore, between Bombay and four States in Kathiawar, and between Bombay and Trivandrum in Travancore, with an extension to Trichinopoly. Civil aviation owes much to private flying clubs and to the interest taken in it by the Princes. There are fifty-eight aerodromes in the States; seven flying clubs have been started in British India, at Karachi, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Cawnpore, Delhi, and Lahore, and three in the States, at Jodhpur, Hyderabad, and Jaipur. So far, however, civil aviation is in an initial stage. At the end of 1938 there were only about 750 trained pilots and only 156 aeroplanes had been registered for civil aviation—all imported, as up to then no Indian wood had been discovered possessing all the qualities desired in aircraft production. The cost of air travel is

beyond the means of the great mass of the people, but the potentialities of this form of transport are being realized and a certain air-mindedness is becoming apparent, as may be judged from the answer given by a Punjabi police-constable, who, in order to test his geographical knowledge, was asked how he would go from Lahore to Madras and replied 'By air'. The aeroplane is being used for novel purposes. A company was formed a few years ago to carry pilgrims to the Himalayan shrine of Badrinath at over 10,000 feet above sea-level; the lightning tour which Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, then president of the Indian National Congress, undertook by means of aeroplanes during the elections of 1937 is believed to have had a considerable influence on their results.

Broadcasting is another recent introduction with immense possibilities for good and evil. It started in 1926, when a private company, the Indian Broadcasting Company, received a licence to establish broadcasting services on lines similar to those of the British Broadcasting Corporation in Great Britain and transmitting stations were set up at Bombay and Calcutta. The company failed, however, to make a commercial success of its operations—there were only 7,000 licences—and it went into liquidation in 1930, when the Government of India took over the service and formed an Indian State Broadcasting Service. Broadcasting in India is therefore one of the many activities of the State. It now bears the designation of All-India Radio, which has the suggestive initials of A.I.R. and is popularly known as the *Raddu*. Since 1935 a comprehensive scheme of organization has been in progress, which aims at establishing services operating from different transmitting stations, and giving programmes, in the main colloquial languages, suited to the cultural tastes of the different provinces, besides relaying British and European services. There have been great difficulties to overcome, linguistic, technical, and financial. There is a formidable variety of languages; there are apt to be excruciating atmospherics due to climatic conditions; the number of persons able to buy a set, and competent to keep it in order, is limited. There are, however, public receiving sets or 'community sets' with loud speakers by means of which the assembled villagers can 'listen in' in the cool of the evening when their work is done. Various expedients have been tried to solve the problem of maintenance in villages having no electric power. One ingenious idea was a service of travelling vans, which delivered freshly charged accumulators and took away those which had run down. The battery was worked on the penny-in-the-slot system, as it was operated by counters, sold at ten a penny, each of which, when put in the slot, made the battery work for an hour. There



have been difficulties due to prejudice and ignorance. The communal bogey comes into evidence over the question of staff, if we may judge from questions in the Legislative Assembly about the numbers of Hindus and Muslims employed. In one area, when aërials were first put up, objections were made to workmen going on the roofs of houses on the ground that they would peer into the purdah quarters. In others it was suspected that the object of government in installing wireless apparatus was to tap the villagers' talk for some sinister purpose. But it is a common experience that, however suspicious of innovations they may be at first, they appreciate any new thing as soon as they are convinced of its cheapness and utility, and wherever broadcasting has been introduced, it has become popular. At present, however, it is in an initial stage, as so few can afford sets. In Great Britain there are nine million receiving licences, but in India the number is only 100,000 and there are only about 1,000 community sets for over half a million villages.

Broadcasting is being employed as an educational medium as well as for the purpose of entertainment, and the daily programmes include a villagers' hour, in which there is a judicious admixture of the two. It is being used as an instrument for promoting the social and economic betterment of the rural populace, short and simple talks being given on such subjects as hygiene and sanitation, crops and crop diseases, the prevention of epidemics, child welfare, and the co-operative movement. Subjects such as these undoubtedly arouse interest among those who are able to listen in, and they have a response in inquiries about varieties of seeds, the prevention of epidemic diseases, methods of irrigation, &c. Other items of general interest are the news, weather conditions and forecasts, and, perhaps most of all, quotations of market prices. The last are particularly appreciated as they help to prevent cultivators from being swindled by middlemen and dealers, and they will walk miles in order to hear them. In general, however, it would appear that the majority do not want to be talked at so much as to be diverted and to obtain relief from the dull monotony of village life. They do not want A.I.R. as a mentor so much as an entertainer, and the most popular features of programmes are Indian music and songs, and humorous dialogues, racy of the soil, in which the villagers take a huge delight.

Broadcasting in India, though still in its infancy, has already helped the rural population to get out of a confined mental atmosphere and given it a glimpse of the world beyond the limits of its daily life. It is as impossible to forecast as it would be difficult to exaggerate what will be its ultimate effects. There can be no doubt as to its value as a means of communication in a land of wide

spaces and great distances with many hundreds of thousands of scattered villages. It is an ideal medium for giving instruction and conveying information to a people of whom the majority are unable to read and write. It has obviously almost unlimited potentialities for good, and also for evil unless properly directed, in view of the prevailing ignorance of the masses and of their peculiar susceptibility to mass suggestion. It is difficult to convey to Europeans unacquainted with India an adequate conception of the backward state of the more remote villages, but some idea of it may be gathered from an account given by an Indian writer in 1930:

'Living mostly in tiny hamlets . . . where no civilizing influence penetrates, where the march of progress which has touched the cities has never ventured to reach, where newspapers seldom find their way, save when a schoolmaster in one of the larger villages or a priest reads aloud to them, where news itself comes in the form of a terrific rumour wafted by the winds, the masses of the Indian population have remained unchanged from the days when Emperor Asoka ruled over them.'

It is unnecessary to stress the educative influence the wireless may have on a people living under such conditions and the part it may play in moulding their thought, enriching their experience, and broadening their outlook.

Another new factor in social life is the cinema, but its influence scarcely extends beyond the perimeter of the cities and larger towns, except when a travelling cinema goes round the villages; there are close on one thousand cinema theatres and about five hundred touring cinemas. Films were first introduced in India in 1914 and quickly came into popularity, their appeal to the eye proving the truth of Horace's saying:

*Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures  
Quam quae sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus et quae  
Ipse sibi tradit spectator.*

The silent films, depending as they did on self-explanatory action without dialogue, were particularly suited to Indian audiences, as they got over the difficulties presented by a polygot population, for the same film could be shown all over India and was intelligible whatever the language spoken. The situation was changed when the talking or sound film came into vogue. The first films of this kind being either British or American, their dialogue could be understood only by those who knew English, but on the other hand they introduced a new element which overcame the barriers of language, viz. music. As has been pointed out by Mr. Dewan

\* C. S. Ranga Iyer, *India—Peace or War* (1930), p. 108.



Sharar, it is an age-old canon of Indian dramatic art that songs should form a part of the plays presented on the stage and consequently '“the musical”, that typical product of the West, no sooner reached the East than it settled down there and became naturalized'.<sup>1</sup>

It was after the introduction of the talking or sound film that the film became, so to speak, naturalized in India, and a film industry came into being producing pictures in which the language, character, and scenes are Indian. The first Indian sound film appeared in 1931 and proved an immediate success. Others followed in quick succession, and there was a gradual improvement in technique and also in quality, as the services of competent writers were enlisted. There are now a certain number of films which from the technical point of view can compare with good American or British films, though the great majority cannot. The latest development is the colour film, which was first produced in 1936. The earlier films drew almost exclusively on mythology for their subjects, which they found in the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, and the *Puranas*, until there was a surfeit of them and a reaction set in against their monotony. The producers then turned to historical themes and to pictures of contemporary life with a certain number of 'thrillers'; there is certainly no lack of variety. Altogether seventy-five producing companies were in existence in 1939, employing 40,000 persons.<sup>2</sup> There is a galaxy of Indian stars, one lady being known as 'the Star of India'. Big cities have crowds of film fans, and a Film Fan Association has been formed in Madras, where it is estimated that 10,000 persons a day 'go to the pictures'. The cinema has in fact an assured place in popular favour, both among the unsophisticated masses and the cultured classes, and it has to some extent displaced the legitimate drama, with the result that many theatres have been converted into picture palaces.

British and American films are appreciated by those who know English and are familiar with western life, but their whole atmosphere is foreign to the general Indian public, which finds in them much that is objectionable. Scenes of violence and crime, the stress laid on sexual passion, and the want of restraint and decorum in love scenes, all tend to bring discredit on the West in popular estimation. The Indian pictures are mainly of three classes. One

<sup>1</sup> 'The Cinema in India: Its Scope and Possibilities', *The Asiatic Review* (1937), pp. 460, 467. I am much indebted to this article and to an article 'Indian Cinematography: A Retrospect', by Mr. Banksey Bihari, published in *The Indian Review*, December 1938.

<sup>2</sup> According to returns made in 1939, out of 996 cinema theatres 198 show only foreign films, 532 show only Indian films, and 266 show both, but the reports of Boards of Film Censors at Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, and Lahore show that foreign films largely outnumber Indian films.

has for its theme religious and mythological subjects, based on legends of deities, saints, and warriors. The second consists of musical comedies, and the third of pictures of social life, many full of humour and satire, in which not infrequently the clash between western and Indian standards of life and thought is brought into prominence. Those of the first class are said to be extremely popular both among the elder and more orthodox classes and among the unlettered masses, but, it is said, 'the younger generation of townsfolk is much more modern in its outlook, and though its members go to see religious films out of a sense of duty, they prefer British or American films, pictures of social life, and Indian-made comedy films'.<sup>1</sup>

Addressing the South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce in 1939, its president criticized the Indian films on three grounds. According to him, they are of excessive length, running for 3½ or 4 hours; they fail to concentrate on high emotional acting and indulge in sensational stunts; they depend too much for their themes on *bhakti*, i.e. devotion to God, with a consequent lack of variety. Other critics complain of the hackneyed nature of the epic or Puranic films, as they are called, as well as of anachronisms such as electric light and modern sofas in pictures of a legendary past. There is a demand for more films of a serious purpose and of educative value with subjects such as social evils and nationalism; and this is being met to some extent, if we may judge from the Press notice of a technicolour film released in 1939, which says that it deals with such matters as the dangers of modernity, the evils of custom, the strength and weakness of Indian families, the pitfalls of young men, the flirtations of young women, and, above all, the glory and grandeur of India's motherhood. A certain number of films have been produced for educational purposes, and good work has been done with travelling cinemas, the film being recognized as a useful auxiliary in campaigns of rural uplift. But the main object of the films, as in other countries, is entertainment by taking people away for a few hours from the cares of everyday life, and producers who cater for the public and have to satisfy popular taste find that religious themes and music still make the widest appeal.

To sum up, it may be said without exaggeration that the whole structure of national life has been profoundly affected by the introduction of printing and by the modern means of transit and communication which India owes to the West. Books and newspapers, combined with the spread of English, have produced a communion of thought among educated Indians, and also a closer communion of thought between educated India and the West. Trade has been

<sup>1</sup> Dewan Sharar, 'The Cinema in India: Its Scope and Possibilities', *Asiatic Review* (1937), p. 467.



transformed by a network of railways connecting different parts of the country with one another and with the seaports. The triumphs of the irrigation engineer are an insurance against famine. Roads and railways have given mobility to labour. The motor-bus is bringing the villages into closer touch with the towns, and broadcasting is helping to break down the barriers of space. The exact psychological effect of these latest importations from the West is hard to estimate, but there is little doubt that the peasant who can use a motor-bus for pleasure or business, and who can get news of the outside world through broadcasting without moving from his village, is a different being from the untravelled and unsophisticated peasant of the past.

As regards machinery in general, although it is a factor of importance in national life, it is still of only minor importance. It is one of the many paradoxes connected with India that though it is one of the eight most important industrial countries in the world,<sup>1</sup> it is not really an industrial country, but one which contains a certain number of industrial districts. In the latter an industrial revolution may be said to have taken place; they contain large aggregations of factory labour working in the clang and din of whirling machinery, and some of the evils which characterized the early days of industrialization in the West have been reproduced. The industrial revolution is not only local but of comparatively recent origin. In 1893 there were only 715 factories in existence; the two chief mill industries, jute and cotton, did not attain any real importance till late in the nineteenth century; large-scale metal production scarcely began until the twentieth century, before which there were few iron and steel works of any consequence. The greatest development has taken place since the Great War. Progress during the last twenty years has been extraordinarily rapid and local manufacturers are already supplying some of India's needs but not all. For machinery, the primary need of production, she has still to rely largely on foreign countries; one-fifth of the total imports consists of machinery—a fact which incidentally demonstrates the way in which manufacturing industries are developing. Industry has been decentralized to some extent of recent years, an increasing number of industrial undertakings using mechanical power having been started at places away from the chief industrial centres. South India is now fairly well equipped with electric power, and it is becoming a common experience in the country-side to hear the 'chug, chug' of a little engine either crushing sugar-cane, or pressing oil, or milling rice. But taking the country as a whole the individual worker is still the

<sup>1</sup> India is represented on the Council of the International Labour Office at Geneva by virtue of her position as one of the eight chief industrial countries.

unit in industrial affairs, and there has been no industrial revolution except in the districts just referred to.<sup>1</sup>

There has been no drift to the towns such as followed the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain. The towns are mostly centres of trade but not of organized manufactures; in the small towns, of which many resemble overgrown villages, the industries are chiefly hand industries. The remainder of the country is predominantly agricultural, and throughout the greater part of it agriculture is carried on without the aid of modern mechanical appliances. This is not simply because of blind prejudice, obdurate conservatism, or mere hostility to innovations, but in most cases because the peasant, having little or no capital, is unable to afford them. The outlay would be a risky investment, and, if it should fail, it would make his circumstances still more straitened. Inventions which are within his means and of which the value has been proved are adopted readily enough, as, for instance, an improved type of sugar mill with iron rollers worked by bullock power. In any case the holdings are, in general, so small and labour is so cheap that there is little scope for machinery. In most agricultural operations—ploughing, reaping, winnowing, and threshing—machinery, so far from displacing, scarcely supplements human labour and that of the bullock, which pulls the plough, treads out the grain, and takes it away to market. The prominent feature of rural transport is still the bullock cart, though motor omnibuses ply on the main routes and are increasingly used, while bicycles have made their way into remote villages. Handicrafts are still the main means of manufacture; even the hand loom has not yet been superseded by the power loom, and is responsible for the production of nearly one-third of the cotton goods used in India.<sup>2</sup> The village handicraftsmen use the same simple but effective tools as their forefathers, and there are few signs of the machine age except for Singer's sewing-machines, which the *darzi* or tailor buys on the hire-purchase system. The reception of western inventions has been passive, and they have not stimulated a responsive inventiveness. The people are not machine-minded, and neither the value nor the need of labour-saving and other

<sup>1</sup> A parallel may be found in Italy as it was in 1926, when an Italian wrote: 'Italy has not yet entered the field of capitalism. Her only industrial district is to be found in the valley of the Po; the remainder of the country is devoted almost entirely to agricultural and household industries. Italy lacks the financial and industrial atmosphere which pervades the Anglo-Saxon countries and Germany and France, and from this point of view she is for the most part a patriarchal country occupied with local interests.' G. Prezzolini, *Fascism* (1936), Preface.

<sup>2</sup> The total amount of cotton piece-goods available for consumption in India in 1936-7 was 5,750 million yards, of which Indian mills provided 3,470 million yards, handlooms 1,490 million yards, and imports 790 million yards.



mechanical appliances is felt to any but a slight extent. This, as has just been said, is partly because labour is cheap and the people are poor, having little capital to invest in them. Even more, perhaps, it is due to the simplicity of life to which they are inured. They are indifferent to amenities which western peoples have come to regard as necessities; and may be said to be happy with the happiness of unborn wants.

## CHAPTER VII

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### INTRODUCTION

OPINIONS as to the results of western contacts and British rule on economic developments in India range between two extreme views. The one maintains that under British rule economic development has made great strides, and attributes this progress largely to British rule. The other asserts that British rule has involved subjection to imperial interests, oppressive financial burdens, and inappropriate institutions and policies, which, together with continued adherence to obscurantist social and religious customs and institutions, have resulted in increased pressure on the land, the exploitation of India, a drain of wealth to Great Britain, and the dire poverty of the masses. Critics of British rule may themselves be subdivided into two main groups. The first accepts western economic ideals, but maintains that British rule has hindered and distorted India's economic development by stifling enterprise and industrial development. The second, anti-capitalist, group asserts that British rule has involved exploitation of the masses and opposes the new constitution and federation on the score that they are designed to strengthen the stranglehold of vested interests—represented by landlords, money-lenders, and capitalists—over India's political and economic life. 'Our life is being poisoned', writes Professor N. G. Ranga, 'by the tightening grips of the huge python of our subjection to this Empire.'<sup>1</sup> Which of these views is nearest to the truth?

An answer to this question involves a factual appraisal of the extent and nature of the economic changes which have occurred, an assessment of their effects on various sections of the population and on prosperity in general, and an evaluation of the part played therein by western influences. Even the facts of economic change are difficult to describe and impossible to measure, owing to the size and diversity of the country and the inadequate records and statistics. What is true of one area or section of the population is not true of others. Statistical records are available only for recent decades and are still incomplete and unreliable. There is still no census of production and little is known about the general level of wages, the cost of living, or the distribution of incomes. Reliance has, therefore, to be placed on generalizations from incomplete and sectional data and on circumstantial evidence.

<sup>1</sup> *Presidential Address to the Second All-India Kisan Conference*, 26 December 1936, p. 2.



Hence even in the descriptive sphere the problem is largely one of interpretation.

It must also be admitted that there is no means of determining the degree of responsibility attributable to western contacts and British rule. The changes that have occurred must be attributed to the interaction of western and eastern ideas, customs, institutions, and peoples, not solely to western influences. For instance, when it is said that British rule led to the opening-up of India during the second half of the nineteenth century, it should not be implied that the British alone are responsible for the benefits of improved transport. Railways and irrigation works, factories and plantations might have been established if the British had never set foot in India. But in the latter case economic life and institutions would undoubtedly have been vastly different, in important respects, from what they actually are. All that can be inferred from the forthcoming account is, therefore, that the trends described resulted from the impact of western influences on the Indian environment.

Sociologists have distinguished stages of economic development, but their classifications are irrelevant for our purpose, as, apart from certain primitive tribes and backward areas, India had attained the stage of 'civilization' long before the British era, whilst she has not yet attained the 'high capitalism' characteristic of industrialized western powers. The developments to be described consist not so much of a transition from one stage to another as of the gradual extension to an ever greater proportion of the population of economic features and organization, such as the use of money and of capital, division of labour, and economic diversification, which are characteristic of modern economic life, but existed in India in certain areas, or in embryo, before the British era. In more concrete terms, what has to be described is the transition from eighteenth-century conditions, when Indian economic life was based fundamentally on the isolated, self-sufficing village—'higher' forms of production and organization being confined to specific classes and areas—to the present state of affairs, when production has been substantially commercialized, the use of money predominates, and approximate economic unification has been attained. Although the process is still incomplete, it is clearly under way.

It is undeniable that events connected with the establishment and extension of British rule in India set in motion far-reaching economic processes, and that an economic organization which (except for local and temporary fluctuations in prosperity, mainly due to seasonal and political changes) had previously remained essentially unchanged throughout many centuries, has, as a result

of closer contact with the West, undergone what fully deserves to be called an 'economic revolution'. Indeed, the widespread commercialization of economic life, unaccompanied by a corresponding degree of industrialization, has formed the basis of the criticism that British rule has undermined the old, more stable organization without introducing the advantages of modernization. The essence of the change has been the replacement of a non-progressive (but by no means secure) economic order, based on status and custom, by a dynamic order, based on contract and the strict enforcement of a codified legal system, but involving a new type of insecurity, owing to increased dependence upon external influences and to failure to discover a remedy for the greater fluctuations in economic life which have accompanied increased specialization, exchange, and scale of production.

#### ECONOMIC REACTIONS

In analysing the economic results of western contacts in India it is desirable to bear in mind the framework within which the specifically economic activities of the government and of private European settlers have worked, with special reference to (a) the racial relationship resulting from the particular mode of penetration and settlement by Europeans and the personal activities of the various classes of settlers, and (b) the general social and political principles held at different periods by the Government of India. In this connexion it is necessary to emphasize how different the trend of economic development would have been if the early nineteenth-century projects for the extensive colonization of India had been put into effect, if there had been widespread alienation of land to Europeans, accompanied by the direct exploitation or employment of indigenous agricultural labour, or if British administrators and members of the various professions had adopted a different attitude towards those amongst whom they lived and worked.

The chief forms taken by specifically economic reactions and movements include, on the one hand, those which have arisen spontaneously from the imitation and adoption of western customs, institutions, or methods and, on the other, conscious movements either in imitation of, or in opposition to, western influences. Spontaneous imitation has arisen from admiration of and desire for western goods and institutions, and from recognition of the superior efficiency and utility of appropriate western technical appliances and methods. The problem of discovering western goods suited to climatic conditions and Indian purses was eventually partially solved by the Industrial Revolution, which provided vast supplies of cheap cotton clothing and other miscellaneous manufactures.



Even so the chief purchasers were the more prosperous classes, the masses being prevented by grinding poverty, traditional conservatism, inertia, and the cheapness of labour from any widespread adoption of western amenities and labour-saving devices. There has been no wholesale revolution in Indian daily life. Diets are still mainly based on traditional local production and caste requirements, and clothing is largely unaltered in style, though mill-made. Aniline-dyed products, at one time mainly imported, but now chiefly made in Indian mills, have replaced the former vegetable-dyed products of the spindle and hand-loom. Rural houses remain mere huts, constructed by their inmates from locally procurable material, and with a minimum of furniture or decoration. Utensils and tools remain primitive, although imported metal (especially aluminium) goods tend to replace local brassware and pottery, more iron is used for agricultural purposes, and improved hand-looms are being widely adopted. The most striking and widespread changes are the replacement of vegetable oil by kerosene as an illuminant, and the remarkable response to improved means of transport and communications. If Rip van Winkle had fallen asleep in Akbar's time, and awoke to-day in a rural area, he would at first notice little difference in his environment, unless he happened to be in the neighbourhood of one or other of the great public works. But he would soon be convinced that his first impression was superficial. He would find that there had been a revolution in agrarian relationships, that a denser population produced larger and better crops from smaller holdings, selling (instead of consuming) a substantial proportion of the output, and that assistance, previously completely lacking, is now forthcoming in times of emergency such as epidemics of disease or crop failures. In addition, alternative means of livelihood in urban centres, on plantations, or on the railways and other public works, supplement village incomes. Above all, he would find signs of an amazing change in the mental outlook of the people.

Spontaneous imitation has occurred gradually, though with increased momentum, since western contacts began. But conscious economic movements, whether in imitation of or opposition to western influences, have been mainly confined to recent decades. Imitative economic movements have either been organized voluntarily by groups or classes or have arisen in response to governmental action or private endeavour. The trade-union movement, developed under Indian leadership in close imitation of the British movement, is the outstanding example of voluntary, imitative organization. It began, in connexion with the demand for factory legislation, towards the end of the nineteenth century, but only made substantial headway after the World War. A series of strikes

showed the strength of organized labour, and a number of strong unions and a Trade Union Congress have now developed, although leadership remains largely middle class. Legislation (from 1926) has recognized registered unions and encouraged collective bargaining and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Various social and philanthropic movements with economic implications owe something to western contacts and example. The women's movement, discussed in another chapter, is of outstanding importance, but is so recent that its economic repercussions have so far been limited.

Economic movements in response to governmental action have consisted partly of those far-reaching developments in institutions and customs necessarily arising out of legislative or administrative changes, which will be discussed later in this chapter, and partly of movements inspired (but not compelled) by official action. These latter include, in particular, the co-operative and village uplift (or 'rural reconstruction') movements. The policy has been to stimulate voluntary organization, based on the principle of self-help, but despite the enthusiastic, altruistic efforts of officials achievements have been in some respects disappointing and incommensurate with the intrinsic merits of the movements. An Act passed in 1904 provided for the establishment of credit societies along the lines adopted in Germany and for provincial Registrars to encourage and supervise the movement. The scope of the movement has been extended by subsequent legislation. In addition to credit societies there are now, in rural areas, societies for the purchase of agricultural necessities (such as seed, manure, and implements), for the preparation or marketing of produce (such as cotton ginning, dairying, and rice-milling societies), for the consolidation of holdings, irrigation, the supply of bulls for breeding purposes, and for cattle insurance; and in urban areas there are purchase and sales societies amongst weavers and other artisans. Attempts have also been made to establish consumers' co-operation, but with little success, except in a few outstanding cases. In both rural and urban areas societies have been founded for many miscellaneous objects, such as housing, education, arbitration, thrift, and the promotion of health. A number of district unions and central institutions (especially banks) have also been established for credit and other purposes.

In several provinces (particularly the Punjab, Bombay, and Madras) and in certain Indian States (especially Travancore, Bhopal, Gwalior, and Mysore) excellent work has been done by enthusiastic Registrars and other leaders, and there are now some four million members of primary societies. Where the movement has taken root, members' debts have been consolidated and some-



times completely repaid, the prevailing rate of interest has been reduced, permanent improvements in the land and better methods of production have been introduced, a training has been given in thrift, democracy, and self-government, and a new spirit of hope, independence, and self-help has been engendered. But provincial inquiries in the post-war period (leading to the liquidation of many unsound societies and the reorganization of others), and again since 1935, have revealed grave defects and difficulties. Careless loans, heavy arrears of repayments, selfish committees, fictitious repayments, dissensions amongst members, occasional dishonesty, and apathy with regard to the responsibilities involved reveal a failure to appreciate co-operative principles. The Royal Commission on Agriculture (1928) emphasized the potentialities of the movement, but concluded that it was essential to retain official supervision, stressed the need for patient, persistent education in co-operative principles, and drew attention to the dangers arising from the use of short-term funds as a basis for long-term loans, recommending as a remedy the establishment of land mortgage banks. This latter policy has since been adopted in several provinces. So far, therefore, only a small proportion of the population has been affected, and there seems little likelihood of substantial progress in the near future.

The rural reconstruction movement consists of a variety of efforts to revive village life. It has long been recognized (e.g. by Sir Thomas Munro in the early nineteenth century) that one of the worst results of British rule has been the decline in the status and powers of village *panchayats*. These bodies formerly controlled village life and formed a strong social bond amongst the masses. Lord Ripon's resolution of 1882 began a movement for the revival of local self-government, and since the constitutional reforms of 1921 efforts have been made in several provinces to restore the *panchayats*. At the same time certain officials, notably Mr. Brayne (at Gurgaon in the Punjab), have conducted intensive campaigns in particular districts or villages. The Royal Commission on Agriculture recognized the urgent need for such work, and from 1935 to 1937 the central government made special non-recurring grants in aid of provincial rural reconstruction schemes. The chief problems have been to secure co-ordination between the various departments concerned with village life and persistent co-operation between them and the villagers. With this object the Indian Village Welfare Association was founded in 1936, and in several provinces special rural reconstruction campaigns have been undertaken.

These two movements might have been expected not only to prove peculiarly appropriate to Indian conditions, but also to evoke co-operation from nationalists, who complain that British policy

impoverishes the masses and encourages capitalistic exploitation. Actually they have been regarded with suspicion, whilst since Mr. Gandhi turned his attention to social reconstruction, rival movements have arisen on an entirely voluntary basis, and with essentially similar objects but antagonistic on principle to the official policy.

Economic movements arising out of opposition to western influences remain to be considered. The occasions on which economic discontent led to actual violence, or even to organized opposition, during the nineteenth century can almost be counted on one hand, whilst some of these and much of the more widespread and frequent economic unrest of the twentieth century cannot be attributed solely to economic factors. Before the Mutiny the only disturbances attributable to economic discontent were occasional local resistance to land revenue collection and taxation (although this was no more frequent than under pre-British rule), sporadic outbursts against indigo-planters in Bengal, and the Kol and Santal rebellions of 1831 and 1854 respectively, both of which were mainly attributable to official ignorance of local conditions, leading to loss of land and oppression of primitive tribes by landowners and money-lenders who were members of different, and more prosperous races. After the Mutiny the exploitation of the peasantry by indigo-planters in Bengal, and the oppressive action which they took to enforce the cultivation of indigo when it no longer paid for the cost, led to a mass-movement against its cultivation. This culminated in local riots in 1860, after which the cultivators were protected by a stricter administration of the law.

The only other important economic outburst during the nineteenth century occurred in the Deccan in 1873, when the peasant proprietors, who had adopted extravagant habits during a period of unusual prosperity, but were then reduced to great poverty by a series of harvest failures, fell into the power of money-lenders, to whom a western system of law gave facilities to seize and sell their land. An inquiry revealed that about one-third of the peasants were hopelessly indebted and led to the Act of 1879, which prohibited arrest or imprisonment for debt and provided for the reduction of debt and the establishment of conciliation machinery in the affected districts. The Act solved the immediate problem, but subsequently money-lenders circumvented the law by refusing advances except in return for a deed of sale, which is enforced if the borrower defaults.

In the twentieth century the situation changed. The Swadeshi movement, although originally inspired by other motives, stressed economic factors, stimulated Indian hand industries, and imbued



consumers with a preference for Indian products. After the World War, when Mr. Gandhi obtained undisputed leadership, the economic basis of nationalism came strongly to the fore. The civil disobedience movement, which included no-rent and non-payment of taxes campaigns, was at first mainly a political protest, but gradually gained economic roots. Congress still represents many divergent interests and principles, but the economic aspect of its programme is assuming overwhelming importance. The Congress Socialist Party, founded in 1935, is gaining rapidly in strength and had secured one-third of the representation on the Congress Committee even before 1939. A movement for radical changes in the agrarian system has been vigorously promoted by the *Kisan* (Peasant) movement, which has been most active in the United Provinces, Bihar, and Madras, and which began to form Provincial Associations in 1933. The contention is that the peasants are being unjustly expropriated from their land, and that the only remedy for the prevailing poverty is to get rid of the landlords and re-introduce a peasant economy. The aim is eventually to collectivize agriculture, first by abolishing zamindari tenures, reducing land revenue and other taxation, and undertaking legislation to reduce indebtedness; and later by the cultivation of unoccupied and waste land by the co-operative efforts of peasants and manual workers, the development of cottage industries, and the ruralization of industry.

#### MAIN PERIODS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Opinion is unanimous that disorder, misrule, and poverty, resulting from the break-up of the Mughal empire and dissensions between the ruling princes, prevailed in 1765. The district records of Bengal, which was the richest and most advanced province, and that with which the East India Company was at first chiefly concerned, provide ample evidence of the prevailing anarchy and oppression, and conditions were no better in other parts of the country. Bands of robbers pillaged the countryside, and the peasants were exploited and rack-rented by the rulers and revenue farmers.

The assumption and extension of territorial sovereignty by the Company eventually stimulated changes which revolutionized production and trade, but at first the activities of the Company and of private European traders only tended to make matters worse. Misrule, corruption, and oppression continued, trade was seriously disrupted, handicrafts were impoverished, and a drain of wealth from India denuded the country of currency and goods.

Both Parliament and the Company thought of India as a fabulously rich country from which trading profits and large territorial

revenues could be obtained for England's benefit. But the Company soon discovered its mistake. It found there were no 'hidden reserves' of wealth, and was unable to fulfil its financial obligations to the home government. Nevertheless, revenue continued to be used to purchase Indian goods for sale in England, instead of for the better government and economic advancement of the country.

Gross abuses carry within them the seeds of their own destruction. The fortunes and flaunting insolence of the 'nabobs' who returned to England attracted public and parliamentary attention, and led to a series of inquiries. Parliamentary control, instituted by the Regulating Act of 1773, was extended and strengthened each time the Company's charter was renewed. The appalling conditions prevailing in India were gradually revealed and measures were introduced to stop the worst abuses. But economic recovery was slow. Mr. Charles Grant, for instance, said that in 1787 'the country and the people were not in so good condition as that in which we found them . . . the history of our rule in Bengal is in great part a history of our own errors',<sup>1</sup> and he painted a grim picture of the debasing struggle to collect revenue, the drain of wealth, and the terrible sufferings during famines.

In areas under direct Company rule signs of economic recovery began to be visible early in the nineteenth century, but elsewhere disorder and misrule continued much later. The charter of 1813 removed the Company's monopoly, trade recovered slightly from its previous nadir, bullion again became an item of import, and the excess of exports over imports was somewhat reduced. But private traders, not the Company, reaped the benefit. For several decades the only profitable lines of the Company's trade had been the import of minerals and metal goods and exports of textiles, especially cotton piece-goods. But the latter trade, which had long been largely confined to re-exports to the Continent, was now hit by the Napoleonic wars, the growing competition from Lancashire, and increased duties on Indian imports into England. Duties on most Indian products were exorbitant, whilst the preference given to West Indian produce prevented the development of sugar exports. Only the indigo trade flourished, and this was in the hands of private traders. The Company made a net loss on its trade, ceased to import into India after 1824, gradually relinquished its unprofitable lines of export, and in 1833 surrendered its commercial functions and became a purely administrative body. The establishment of European 'agency houses' and later of joint-stock banks assisted European traders, facilitated investment in India, and helped to maintain government credit, but undermined the

<sup>1</sup> Observations of Mr. Charles Grant, General Appendix to the *Report of the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company*, 1832, vol. 1, p. 18.



indigenous banking and credit system, which had already been disturbed by trade changes, the shortage of currency, and the downfall of Indian rulers. This led also to the present undesirable division of the Indian money market into two unco-ordinated sections—European and Indian.

Before 1833 European traders had attempted to introduce various factory and plantation industries into India. Steam was utilized in some cases, but the attempt to industrialize was premature and only the indigo industry proved successful. After 1833, however, the production and export of raw materials and foodstuffs demanded by industrialized England began to expand, a tendency which continued at an accelerated pace during the second half of the nineteenth century. Private enterprise succeeded where the Company had failed, partly because the latter was bound by burdensome obligations to the home government, but chiefly because by its very nature the former was less tied by rules and traditions and hence was better able to experiment. Moreover, the Company's staple export, i.e. cotton piece-goods, declined between 1815 and 1833 to a negligible figure. During the same period the annual import of Lancashire's piece-goods by private traders rose from a negligible figure to over one million sterling. This was the real beginning of the decline of the indigenous industries which continued throughout the nineteenth century and which has been so greatly deplored. Hence, even when production and trade were on the up grade after 1833, certain sections of society, including handicraftsmen, bankers, some traders, and (as will subsequently be seen) certain classes of peasants, were adversely affected.

The other chief forces affecting economic development between 1833 and 1858 were the increased security accompanying the extension of the *Pax Britannica*, the land settlements carried out in each area that came under British control, legislative and administrative changes conducive to commercial activity, various attempts to improve crops, and governmental measures preparatory to the opening-up of the country in the second half of the century. Increased security encouraged production, but led to a great increase in population, whilst the land policy pursued, although it introduced greater certainty and thus stimulated cultivation, involved loss of land by many former proprietors and tenants. Hence progress in certain respects was partially counteracted by disadvantages in other respects and the emergence of new problems.

An important social reform during this period was the abolition of the legal status of slavery in 1843. The practice of slavery, mainly domestic and agrestic in type, and of slave-trading had been widespread and involved grave abuses. The ordinance of 1843

permitted slaves to claim their freedom and prohibited further enslavement, but did not oblige immediate emancipation, and the slaves gradually asserted their rights, especially when alternative occupations, such as railway construction, became available, and the system gradually died out. The economic results of emancipation were, in the short run, small. The ex-slaves either continued to work on the land as tenants or wage-earners, or else obtained employment on the railways, or on plantations, or in urban industries. But, in the long run, emancipation set a standard condemnatory of the gross exploitation of labour.

From the eighteenth century onwards efforts were made by the Company and private individuals to introduce new and better crops, especially new varieties of cotton and various plantation products, and to develop sericulture. But success was limited, largely because efforts were mainly confined to the introduction of exotics, little being done to improve indigenous varieties. Moreover, the peasants found that it paid them better to produce short-stapled cotton for local markets rather than long-stapled cotton for export. Lancashire only imported substantial quantities of Indian cotton during the Anglo-American War of 1812 and the American Civil War. The Company did, however, succeed in introducing tea-plantation into Assam. Development was for a time retarded by lack of capital and knowledge, and as soon as the experimental stage was over, the plantations were handed over to private enterprise, which reaped the benefit during the second half of the century. The Company also assisted Josiah Heath to establish modern iron-smelting works in and after 1825. But these experiments failed, chiefly because of the scarcity of charcoal.

Measures preparatory to the opening-up of India were tentatively begun under Lord William Bentinck and seriously undertaken by Lord Dalhousie. The latter centralized and reformed the administration, established the Public Works Department, encouraged the construction of roads and irrigation works, reformed the postal service, and inaugurated the telegraph system, forest conservation, and railway construction. Irrigation was, of course, no novelty in India, but the ancient works had fallen into decay during the eighteenth century. The Company, seriously hindered by lack of capital, undertook renovations in the north in the 'twenties, and in the south Sir Arthur Cotton undertook many improvements in and after 1834; but fresh problems were created, for in many areas the rise in the subsoil water levels due to the construction of canals led to the appearance of a saline efflorescence known as *reh*, which destroys the fertility of the soil, and there was increased malaria from the stagnant water.

The greatest development of all, upon which the commercial



revolution of the second half of the century depended, was the construction of railways. Projects were discussed in the early 'forties, but nothing was done until the arrival of Dalhousie. In 1849 the first agreements between the government and two companies were signed; in the early fifties lines were opened from Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras; and in 1853 Dalhousie wrote his famous minute which laid down a scheme for the whole country and formed the basis of the system actually constructed. Railway construction not only opened up the country, but also introduced a new era of capital import into India and popularized the joint-stock method of organization and finance. Previously little European capital entered India, and, as we have seen, there was even a tendency to export wealth up to 1813. The Company always suffered from lack of funds, and although experienced planters and business men promoted enterprise and trade, they worked largely with capital borrowed in India from Indian or (more often) European capitalists, particularly the agency houses, which held large funds accumulated from profits made in India. During the era of railway construction a great change occurred. The import trade in particular made rapid progress, reflecting the demand for plant, machinery, and equipment, which were the main forms taken by the investment of European capital in India.

By the time the Company ceased to rule, population, production, and trade had substantially increased, and the process of commercialization, which eventually modernized India, was already under way. The chief stimuli to economic development had so far been the introduction of order and security, changes in the land system, improved communications between East and West, and the English industrial revolution. From 1858 to 1900 may be called the period of the 'opening-up' of India. A great railway net and a series of irrigation works were constructed, canal colonization started, and a system of famine relief was developed. These public works increased productivity and trade, facilitated mobility and large-scale industries, and in general tended to commercialize and modernize the country. Hence, although *laissez-faire* was long the official policy, in practice the government was induced to adopt a far-reaching, though still one-sided and incomplete, economic programme. The railways were of outstanding potency. By creating the conditions necessary for specialization they revolutionized production and trade, enabled the establishment of large-scale modern industries, and led to the development of great ports and industrial centres. In 1908 it was estimated that overseas trade had more than quintupled in value during the past fifty years, whilst as prices were slightly lower than in 1856, the volume of trade had increased still more. The railways also tended to equalize

prices throughout the country and throughout the year, and, in general, to effect economic unification and bring Indian prices into close relationship with world prices. As a necessary preliminary to the distribution of relief, railways did even more than the famine relief organization to transform the famine problem. They also helped to make slave-emancipation a reality by providing alternative occupations and facilitating mobility. Hence although they did not make a profit for the government before 1899, their indirect effects undoubtedly more than counterbalanced the financial cost. Since then, except in years of serious depression, they have been a substantial source of revenue.

The railway system has not escaped serious criticism. It has been said, on the one hand, that railways are inappropriate in Indian conditions and have led to social disorganization and the decay of indigenous industries; or, on the other hand, that the money spent on them would be more profitably devoted to irrigation. Other critics urge that the system is insufficient and inefficient, that management has suffered from the defects without the advantages of nationalization, and that conditions of third-class travel are disgraceful. But, whatever their defects, it is clear that the railways have been the principal stimulus to modernization, whilst post-war reforms—including, in particular, the separation of the railway from the general budget in 1925, which rendered the railway programme independent of seasonal vicissitudes—have done much to remedy administrative defects and have been accompanied by a *de facto* trend towards nationalization. At present 74 per cent. of the lines are State-owned and 44 per cent. are State-managed. Trade depression and the growing competition of motor traffic have recently given rise to difficulties, but the problem may prove less intractable in India than in many other countries, if only because of the paucity of branch lines. It may prove possible to develop road transport in co-operation with the railways, motor traffic acting as 'feeders' to the main lines.

The construction of irrigation works was seriously hampered under Company rule by lack of capital and engineering skill. Rapid progress was made in the 'sixties, and canal colonization started in the 'nineties. To-day the total irrigated area is some 50 to 60 million acres, representing some 20 per cent. of the total cultivated area, and, allowing for double-cropping, a larger proportion of the crops; the Sukkur barrage, the largest irrigation work in the world, will, when in full operation, alone provide water for 5 million acres. This compares with some 18 to 19 million acres under irrigation in the United States and 6 millions in Egypt. Irrigation has immensely augmented total productivity and the security of life in areas previously dependent upon the monsoon. In many districts



several crops can now be reaped instead of one, neighbouring areas are helped by the rise in subsoil water and increased moisture in the air, and in some cases the desert has literally been made to blossom like the rose. Canals designed for profit, and not merely for protection against famine, have yielded a high return, especially in the Punjab. But there are physical and financial limits to the construction of irrigation works. An unfailing supply of water can only be obtained in certain cases, whilst financial success can only be assured where cultivators are willing to pay for water not only when the monsoon fails but every year. In certain areas irrigation has already been carried to its extreme limits, as the canals and drainage systems have exhausted subsoil water supplies, so that wells tend to dry up. This accounts for the otherwise inexplicable fact that the total area under irrigation has not, according to government figures, increased in full proportion to the area added by new canal construction.

Dependence upon the independable monsoon has always subjected India to famines, and there are records of terrible scarcities, suffering, and loss of life on this account in pre-British days. The Company was unable to provide a solution or even substantial relief. The Orissa famine of 1866 marked an epoch, after which the government realized the urgent necessity for assuming responsibility for prevention and relief. The main methods were railway construction, irrigation works, and famine relief organization, designed to provide and move food to the afflicted areas. Relief works are established at which rations can be obtained in return for unskilled labour, whilst food is distributed to those unable to work. Famine codes give detailed instructions for the procedure to be adopted. The problem has now been transformed from one of saving life and preventing death to one of providing employment and food for those temporarily deprived of the means of livelihood, and whereas deaths from starvation during famines between 1854 and 1901 have been estimated at over 28 millions, it is claimed that since 1900 no deaths from actual starvation have occurred. Food is supplied and distributed, and the peasants are helped to restart cultivation the following season.

Other important economic events during the second half of the nineteenth century were the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which effected a marvellous reduction in the time and expense of transport between East and West and greatly stimulated Indian exports, the development of the cotton and jute mill industries, the opening-up of the Bengal coal-fields and of the Burma oil-fields, the establishment of modern ironworks at Raniganj, the development of engineering works, and the great extension of tea and coffee plantations (until the latter were hard hit by disease in

the 'eighties). By the end of the century production and trade had been revolutionized. Irrigation increased yields, whilst railways distributed the products and imported merchandise; increased use of money and the gradual replacement of custom by contract facilitated mobility, the division of labour, and the localization of industry; and the capital equipment of the country was greatly augmented by the investment of foreign capital in India in the form of railway plant and equipment, machinery, and other goods needed by the growing textile, plantation, and mining industries. Between 1854 and 1869 imports and exports were practically equal, but after 1870 the normal excess of exports over imports was restored, partly because some of the necessary capital was then raised by the government in India, partly because of interest payments on the foreign capital invested in India, and partly because commercialization involved increased payments in England on account of European trading, banking, industrial, and insurance firms at work in India. A counteracting force was that Indians began to adopt the joint-stock principle, to purchase shares in European companies, and to subscribe to government loans. This tendency continued at an accelerated pace during the twentieth century. The steel and cotton mill industries are predominantly Indian-owned; Indians own more than 60 per cent. of the capital of the jute industry, although the latter remains under British management; and the sugar, match, cement and other recently developed modern industries are mainly in Indian hands. At the present time the growth of banking facilities, adoption of joint-stock organization, and greater confidence in industrial concerns since the introduction of 'discriminating protection' are all tending to make India independent of foreign capital, so that the flow of British capital to India has practically ceased.

In the nineteenth century capital was scarce in India, especially for industrial enterprises. Much wealth was held in the form of the precious metals, partly because banking and the investment habit were undeveloped, and partly because the precious metals formed a convenient and liquid store of value for the peasants. Moreover, money-lending, trade, and land-owning formed more remunerative and secure investments than industry or public works. The opportunity of borrowing on favourable terms in London was an undoubted economic advantage, and has helped to improve India's material equipment. Hence India's payments abroad, on account of loans and commercial and financial services rendered, did not at this time constitute a drain of wealth from the country. The borrowed capital was almost entirely used productively, with the result that in the long run returns more than covered interest payments, whilst at least an equivalent return was received for the



expenditure on other economic services rendered by foreigners. On the other hand, foreign management was felt to be a disadvantage, as it was liable to divert investment and development in directions desired by the British rather than by Indians.

At the end of the nineteenth century, however, prosperity was certainly at a low ebb, and the effects of improved equipment and production capacity on the standard of life were dubious. The country was ravaged by a series of famines, culminating in the 'Great Famine' of 1899-1900; plague, which had died out in India early in the nineteenth century but was reintroduced in 1896, dislocated trade; the decline in the gold value of the rupee, after 1873, necessitated increased taxation to meet the home charges payable in sterling in London; and government was embarrassed by the ever-increasing need for revenue, whilst sources of revenue remained limited and inelastic. Land revenue and the salt and opium taxes remained the chief sources of revenue, land revenue alone accounting for some 50 per cent. of the total in 1900. Direct taxation played a very minor role, the level of income-tax remaining extremely low, whilst agricultural incomes were, as they still are, exempt. Nationalists complained that India had been made more dependent upon agriculture and that the protection necessary to develop infant industries had been denied. Indeed, the moderate increases in import tariffs imposed after the Mutiny were gradually reduced, until, between 1882 and 1894, Gladstonian 'free trade' was the accepted policy, despite the practically unanimous Indian desire for protection, and assistance was refused to industries, partly on the *laissez-faire* principle and partly in the interests of English industrialists.

Public works had so far failed to provide 'plenty' for the masses, or even to prevent disaster when the monsoon failed. Judged by modern standards, conditions of work and life in factories and large cities were miserable in the extreme, despite the initiation of factory legislation (from 1881). The indigenous industries had continued to decline throughout the century, and, although it is impossible to measure the decline, it is certain that prices and profits were depressed in all cases, whilst the iron, hand-spinning, and various minor industries had been practically eliminated. Moreover, the quality of the products of the textile and artistic metal industries had deteriorated. Handicraftsmen were forced back upon agriculture and unskilled occupations, so that when the modern textile, plantation, engineering, and iron industries at last began to expand, they recruited labour mainly from the agricultural classes, whilst the numbers employed did not yet compensate for declining employment in the indigenous industries. A similar decline in peasant and artistic handicrafts has occurred in many

other countries. In the twentieth century, however, the decline in indigenous industries was at last arrested, owing both to provincial efforts to assist handicrafts and to the Swadeshi movement. The Indian shipping and ship-building industries also suffered almost complete eclipse during the nineteenth century. This has been attributed to the monopolistic policy of the East India Company and to the English Navigation Acts, but the decisive blow came with the change from wooden sailing ships to iron and steel steamships, as India had no modern iron industry and hence was unable to construct ships of the type required.

After 1900 the tide turned. The pre-war period was remarkably prosperous for agriculture, mining, industry, and trade alike, apart from the short crisis of 1907-8 emanating from America. World demand for Indian exports, which consisted mainly of food-stuffs and raw materials, was expanding, so that a larger volume was marketed at higher prices. World prices rose, but the price of Indian staple exports rose relatively as well as absolutely. Hence the 'terms of trade' changed in India's favour. Production began on a commercial scale of many minerals formerly neglected, and manganese became a principal export. The cotton and jute mill industries grew apace, whilst the Tate Iron and Steel Company was founded, with Indian capital, in 1907. The paper, brick, hardware, soap, cement, rice and flour milling, and other minor urban industries grew in importance, and India's hitherto highly localized power resources (i.e. of coal and oil) were augmented by the establishment of hydro-electric works first in the Mysore gold-fields (1903) and later in Bombay, in parts of northern India, and in Madras. Railways began to pay, irrigation brought in an increasing revenue, and the returns from customs and income-tax were enhanced. The rupee had been stabilized (at 1s. 4d.) and the government was able to meet expenditure in India and the home charges with ease and to reduce taxation.

The World War, despite the inevitable trade dislocation, gave a great stimulus to Indian industries owing to the war demand and the temporary elimination of competing imports from the West. The war revealed India's industrial potentialities and deficiencies. Existing plant worked night and day, but could not be greatly extended owing to dependence upon imported machinery. During the war and post-war periods the home government's opposition to the grant of assistance to industries was removed and provincial Departments of Industries were established in each major province. To-day much is being done to extend the use of improved hand-machinery and patterns by research, technical training, financial aid, and assistance to marketing. The Swadeshi movement continues to flourish, and official and unofficial efforts at rural recon-



struction include in their programmes the development of rural by-industries and handicrafts.

The result was a marked change in economic policy. The oft-expressed desire for more rapid industrialization and a more constructive economic policy could no longer be ignored. Since 1916 revenue tariffs have been progressively raised, a 'general rate' of 25 per cent. being at present in force, and customs now form by far the largest single source of revenue. 'Fiscal autonomy' was granted in 1921, whilst the Fiscal Commission of 1922 recommended a policy of 'discriminating protection'. This led to the appointment of a Tariff Board to examine claims for protection, and to the subsequent grant of protection to the iron and steel, cotton, matches, cement, paper, and some minor industries.

Since the World War periods of prosperity and depression in India have followed closely the general course of the world trade cycle and hence need not be described. Economic policy has developed along the lines laid down earlier in the century, becoming progressively more 'constructive'. A series of inquiries—including the Industrial Commission (1916-18), the Fiscal Commission (1922-3), a number of Currency and Financial Commissions, culminating in the Banking Committee of 1931, the Agricultural Commission (1928), and the Industrial Labour (Whitley) Commission (1931)—have thrown much new light on economic problems, and the reports have been implemented by such measures as the adoption of discriminating protection (accompanied by imperial preference), the establishment of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, the extension of factory, mines, and other industrial labour legislation (in which connexion it is important to remember the influence of the International Labour Office), the establishment of the Reserve Bank in 1935, and the inauguration of marketing schemes and a campaign for rural reconstruction.

The effects of these developments and measures on prosperity and the standard of life will be considered later. Here we will pause to examine in more detail two fundamental questions, viz. population movements and changes in the land system.

#### POPULATION MOVEMENTS

The social and economic changes described above have affected fundamentally the size, density, and distribution of the population, and the latter changes, in their turn, have had striking economic repercussions. Most of the estimates made before the first, but incomplete, census of 1871-2 are too unreliable to merit discussion. In general the bias was towards under-estimation on account of fear of taxation and social customs, such as the tendency to

ignore female infants. But all authorities agree that population tended to increase rapidly in times of political peace and good harvests, that density varied greatly, even between areas not dissimilar in rainfall and fertility, and that (as is still true) there were great fluctuations in the rate of growth from time to time and between districts. From the end of the eighteenth century until the *Pax Britannica* was firmly established population was reduced or growth was checked by wars and famines. Ample evidence exists that fertile land passed out of cultivation and that certain districts were denuded of population.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century India was still 'under-populated' in the sense that positive checks had reduced or kept the population below the number requisite, under existing conditions of production and organization, to secure the greatest returns per head. The establishment under British rule of a degree of security not previously experienced, at least for several centuries, would, under such conditions, enable a substantial population growth even in the absence of spectacular economic improvements. A larger population could be supported at the prevailing standard by a mere extension of cultivation to unoccupied but not inferior land. But as the century proceeded a tendency towards over-population arose, which meant that population could only increase proportionately with economic improvements, except when the famines and natural disasters to which India was periodically subject brought sudden death to many millions and permitted a subsequent enhancement of the rate of growth. After 1900 the famine problem was transformed and this check to population growth was removed.

The view that over-population did not prevail before the second half of the nineteenth century is supported by Sir William Hunter,<sup>1</sup> who stated that there was no sign of over-population before 1840, and by the fact that there was competition for cultivators rather than for land, which had practically no capital value early in the century. Since then the value of land has continuously and greatly increased, and it is widely held that pressure of population has now raised rents in many areas above the economic level, so that land-owners obtain a monopoly profit paid not from the produce of the soil but from the cultivators' earnings from other occupations. The existence of over-population since 1881 receives tentative support from Professor A. R. Carr-Saunders,<sup>2</sup> who points out that Indian vital and population statistics exhibit features—in particular periodic fluctuations in rate of growth and an absence of 'trend' in birth and death rates—not inconsistent with a condition of over-

<sup>1</sup> F. H. Skrine, *Life of Sir W. W. Hunter* (1901), p. 393.

<sup>2</sup> *World Population* (1936), p. 273.



population modified by economic improvements, which have permitted some increase in population over the period as a whole. The fact that an increase in the cropped area has, for several decades, occurred only when new irrigation works have been constructed, suggests that there has been little scope in the recent past, and is likely to be still less in the future, for the extension of cultivation. It is also generally agreed that in the future the construction of new irrigation works is likely to result in greater certainty of cropping rather than in the extension of cultivation. It can therefore be concluded that India's fundamental problem is how to transmute any future improvements in productive capacity into a higher standard of life. It will be suggested later that this objective has been to some slight extent achieved since 1900, but, in the absence of birth control, it remains problematical whether this progress can be accelerated or even maintained in the future.

Increasing pressure of population on the land has been largely responsible for some of the most serious problems which to-day beset agriculture and the peasants. It has not only caused a rise in rents and, where assessment is based on rental value, in land revenue (despite a decline in the rate of assessment), but has also reinforced the tendencies, arising out of a number of social factors which will subsequently be discussed, towards loss of holdings by small cultivators, the subletting, subdivision, and fragmentation of land, and the formation of a large class of landless labourers. As will be shown later, measures have been taken to check or prevent these undesirable tendencies, but they have been neither comprehensive nor completely successful. Moreover, these tendencies had made considerable headway before remedial measures were even attempted. Census returns, owing to the complexity of prevailing tenure systems and changes in classification and enumeration, provide no adequate guide to changes in the proportions of owners and tenants, but do indicate a substantial increase in landless agriculturalists. Between 1921 and 1931 the number of agricultural labourers per thousand owners and tenants rose from 291 to 407.

Increasing pressure on the soil has contributed strongly to the desire for industrialization, but dependence upon agriculture has, if anything, increased. Inaccuracies and changes in classification, especially with regard to employment in and dependence upon industry, prevent any exact estimate of changes in occupational distribution even since the institution of a census. There has certainly been no tendency for the relative importance of industrial occupations to increase, and there is little reason to suppose that there has been any substantial change in the relative importance of agricultural and industrial occupations since the eighteenth

century. Between 1880 and 1929 increased employment in large-scale industries partly counterbalanced the decline in the indigenous industries, but since then, although large-scale industrial output has continued to increase, employment has fallen owing to improvement in technique and organization. It is thus clear that modern industries have so far offered no solution for the population problem. The population problem has also been barely touched by overseas emigration, even during the periods of most vigorous recruitment. The numbers affected were negligible in relation to total population, and the vacancies created were quickly filled by a natural increase of population in areas of recruitment. At present opportunities for emigration are extremely limited, and there are in all only about 2½ million Indians resident overseas.

Since the end of the eighteenth century considerable changes have occurred in the relative density of different provinces and districts. Then the largest agglomerations of population were found in certain inland towns, mainly in the Ganges basin, which were centres of court life and of the indigenous industries. These have declined in size and importance, whilst great ports, railway centres, plantations, and factory towns have arisen elsewhere as a result of the general trend of transport and commercial development. Urban population has undoubtedly increased, and there are now 35 cities with over 100,000 inhabitants, Calcutta and Bombay having more than one million each. These changes have involved considerable internal migrations.

Up to 1921 there was normally net immigration into British India from the Indian States. Since then, however, the balance of economic attractiveness appears to have changed, and there has been net emigration from British India to the States. Until recently a more progressive policy, especially as regards transport, irrigation, and scientific agriculture was pursued in British India, but now not only is the density of population and pressure of population notably greater in British India, but great efforts towards modernization have recently been made in the larger and more progressive Indian States. In the latter there are still considerable areas of cultivable but unoccupied land. A minor factor may also be the tendency to establish factories in Indian States to avoid the stricter factory legislation prevailing in British India.

#### THE LAND AND THE PEASANTS

The economic results of western contacts and British rule must primarily be judged by their influence upon the status and standard of life of the cultivators, who still form the bulk of the population. This subject can best be approached by considering first the land system and then the nature and methods of cultivation.



For many centuries before the rise of the East India Company the assessment and collection of the rulers' traditional share in the produce of the land formed the chief civil function of the government. The land revenue system was, and still is, intimately connected not only with land-owning, but also with the various tenure systems. Originally land revenue consisted of the ruler's share in the grain heap, which varied between one-sixth and one-half of the gross produce, whilst additional cesses were levied when revenue needs were exceptionally great and the harvest permitted. The system was elastic, collection in kind relating payments to productivity. Cultivators had practical permanency of tenure, so long as they paid their share, because population was scarce and competition was for cultivators rather than for land. Akbar regularized the whole system, and introduced the idea of a money valuation of assessments, although payments might still be made in grain. The government's claim was fixed at this time at one-third of the gross produce, but with the break-up of the Mughal empire administration deteriorated, the system of appointing 'farmers' to collect the revenue spread, and extortionate demands were made. The whole system became disorganized, oppressive, and arbitrary. Those in power squeezed what they could out of the unfortunate cultivators, whilst the custom of making *inam*, i.e. revenue-free, grants of land to officials and followers increased the burden on those not thus favoured.

As a result of conquests, grants of overlordship, and the growing practice of 'farming' the revenue, traditional rights of tenure became modified and a large class of intermediaries, often called zamindars, arose between the government and the cultivators. They were responsible for the payment of land revenue and claimed rent from the actual cultivators, although, where the zamindars' proprietary rights were of recent origin, the cultivators retained certain proprietary interests or tenant rights. Hence under Mughal rule two tendencies emerged, which have since become of increasing importance, viz. the change from payment in kind to payment in cash, which transferred to the peasants the risks arising from price fluctuations, and subinfeudation, or the creation of a hierarchy of proprietary and tenant rights with reference to the same piece of land.

Oppressive and arbitrary assessments were particularly prevalent in Bengal when the Company obtained the Diwani in 1765. For a time the Company collected land revenue through the existing Indian agency, but direct administration was assumed in 1772, and it was soon realized that a thorough reorganization was necessary. Henceforward, first in Bengal, and later in each area as it came under British rule, 'land settlement' formed the basic

administrative task. As land and tenure systems varied greatly, no single principle of assessment could be adopted, but procedure was adapted to local conditions.

At first, owing to the influence of English ideas and to the fact that individual zamindars with large holdings prevailed in those areas which first came under British rule, the object was to make a settlement with them, and so to introduce greater certainty and security. This resulted in Cornwallis's famous Permanent Settlement of 1793, which was applied to Bengal, Bihar, the Northern Circars of Madras, and certain districts of the United Provinces. It fixed in cash, in perpetuity, the sum payable as land revenue on each zamindari holding, but recognized the zamindars (many of whom were mere 'farmers') as full proprietors and left them to make their own arrangements with the cultivators, who became their tenants. The zamindars suffered at first, as the assessment was based on a rate of ten-elevenths of the net assets, or rental values. This was not more than had been recently claimed by previous rulers, but the greater rigidity and stricter legal enforcement under the British system meant that many zamindars could not pay, and their lands were seized and sold. In course of time increased population and production led to a rise in rents, so that the relation between land revenue and rental value fell from 90 per cent. to only 25 per cent. in 1900 and about 20 per cent. to-day. Hence, zamindars who had retained their holdings, and those who bought from bankrupts, obtained a large and increasing 'unearned increment' at the expense of the government, whose claim had been permanently fixed, and of the cultivators, whose rents were progressively raised. To-day zamindars in permanently settled areas pay at a far lower rate than land-holders elsewhere, whilst their income, like all agricultural income, is exempt from income-tax. They thus form a privileged class of mainly functionless and often absentee rent-receivers.

The Regulations establishing the Permanent Settlement recognized that the cultivators had also rights in the land, and were entitled to fixity of tenure and rent-rates, and it reserved to government the power to make further regulations for their protection. Nothing, however, was done to define or maintain their rights until 1859, and in the meantime the cultivators were more or less at the mercy of the landlords. The process described by Sir Thomas Munro in 1824 was already in operation.

'We erroneously think', he wrote, 'that all that is necessary for the permanent settlement of a country is that government should limit its own demand. . . . But nothing can be more unfounded than this opinion, or more mischievous in its operation; if . . . some hundreds of proprietary ryots are made to pay their public rents to zamindars, they will soon lose



their independence, become his tenants, and probably end by sinking into a class of labourers . . . this internal change, this village revolution, changes everything, and throws both influence and property into new hands; it deranges the order of society, it depresses one class of men for the sake of raising another.<sup>1</sup>

Although a landlord class was created in Bengal, in pursuance of English theories of ownership and of the value of such a class, these theories were not applied to Madras and Bombay, where a ryotwari settlement was made, i.e. the actual cultivators of the soil were recognized as proprietors, and there were no intermediaries between them and the government.

The abuses, i.e. rack-renting and evictions, to which the Bengal system gave rise made the government realize that the only effectual means of defining and maintaining the rights and interests of cultivators was to make a cadastral survey of the land and a record of rights in it. This measure was proposed for Bengal in 1822 but unfortunately was not put into force. It was, however, adopted for other areas, where settlements were preceded by minute inquiries, and were made on a temporary basis (for from 10 to 30 years), though it was not until 1883 that the idea of eventually making permanent settlements was finally abandoned.

In making these settlements there were two contrary tendencies, each of which prevailed at different times and in different areas. One was to recognize the rights of cultivators, who became peasant proprietors. The other was to constitute a landlord class wherever there were superior tenures approximating to or having a semblance of proprietorship. Rights of ownership were thus given to individual landholders or mere farmers of revenue in Agra, Oudh, and the Central Provinces, and, on the other hand, proprietary rights were given to 'joint village communities', i.e. co-operative bodies of peasants or yeomen possessing land rights, in the same areas and also in the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province. The settlements with the joint village communities were at first joint both in assessment and liability, but co-sharers had a right to demand partition, and the tendency was to recognize individual responsibility, so that a mixed system now prevails. Later in the century settlements which were in principle ryotwari were made with individual cultivators in parts of the Central Provinces and in Assam and Burma. Eventually zamindari and village community settlements accounted for 49 per cent. of the total settled area, 19 per cent. being on a permanent and 30 per cent. on a temporary basis. Ryotwari settlements (including Burma) accounted for

<sup>1</sup> Minute of 31 December 1824, *Report of the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company*, 1832, Evidence, vol. iii (Revenue), Appendix No. 105, p. 474.

51 per cent. Conditions and the bases of settlement varied greatly in detail in different localities, so that the broad generalities here attempted over-simplify the actual situation. Statistics are not available for the Indian States, but the general tendency has been to make ryotwari settlements for temporary periods, usually for less than thirty years.

Many of the defects of the Permanent Settlement were repeated under the temporary settlements. The land revenue claim was at first excessive, and, despite the inquiries, many sub-proprietary and tenant rights were ignored. No distinction was drawn between hereditary landlords and 'farmers' of the revenue, and recognition of proprietary rights in the latter case amounted to a transfer of them from the peasants to an upstart class. Generalization is difficult, but it can be said with substantial accuracy that 'farming' prevailed in Bengal, Agra, Oudh, and the Central Provinces, in the last of which settlements were made with officers called *malguzars*, who had been appointed in what were essentially ryotwari areas. In the Punjab also, although joint village communities prevailed, 'farming' by officials and headmen was widely practised. Extreme disorder prevailed in Oudh before its acquisition in 1856, and although the original intention had been to settle directly with the ryots, *sanads* were eventually issued in 1869 endowing the *talukdars*, as the wealthier zamindars were called, with full proprietorship.

Wherever zamindari settlements were made—in Bengal, Bihar, the United Provinces, the Punjab, and the Central Provinces—legislation was found to be necessary to protect the rights of cultivators and to prevent the rack-renting and eviction of tenants. A start was made with the Bengal Land Law (Act X of 1859), which formed the basis of subsequent tenancy legislation in northern India. It applied in the first instance to Bengal, Bihar, and Agra, and was amplified for the former two provinces by the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885. Each province with zamindari tenures now has its own tenancy law, either by the adoption of the Bengal Acts or by special legislation. This body of legislation closely resembles the Irish land laws, and has sought to provide fixity of tenures, fair rents, free transfer of land, and compensation for improvements. The results and adequacy of the provincial laws vary according to local conditions and legislative provisions. Let us examine briefly a few outstanding examples.

In Bengal the Act of 1859 attempted to distinguish between tenants with traditional hereditary rights and those who had recently acquired tenancies, and to restore the land rights of the former by bestowing the right of occupancy on any tenant who could prove continuous occupation of the same holding for twelve



years. But the 'twelve-year rule' did not work well in this form. Continuous occupation was difficult to prove, whilst in many areas periodic redistribution of holdings was customary. Moreover, landlords began to evict or transfer tenants in the eleventh year or to induce a change of fields in order to prevent the acquisition of occupancy rights. Hence the law was amended in 1885, after which it sufficed to prove continuous occupation of land, not necessarily the same land, in the village. In Bengal and in Bihar, which was administered as part of Bengal until 1905, 80 to 90 per cent. of the ryots were able to fulfil this condition and have, therefore, acquired security of tenure. Some of the rest hold at fixed rates of rent, whilst no tenant can be ejected without a decree of a competent court, and rents can only be enhanced at stated intervals. In these areas ejection and progressive rack-renting have, therefore, been considerably checked.

The Act of 1859, but not that of 1885, applied to the Agra portion of the United Provinces, and in 1901 a special Act introduced minor amendments designed to prevent landlords from defeating the intentions of the Act and to encourage longer leases. But landlords devised new methods of evasion, which involved greater disturbance to cultivation and hardships to tenants than would have occurred in the absence of the possibility of acquiring occupancy rights. Hence in 1926 the Agra Tenancy Act abolished the twelve-year rule and the possibility of acquiring full occupancy rights, and established instead a new class of 'statutory tenants', which includes all former non-occupancy tenants, except those who are tenants-at-will on *sir* land, i.e. the home farm. A statutory tenant has the right of occupancy during his lifetime, and his heir inherits the right for five years, after which the tenancy terminates. Enhancement of rent is limited and can only occur at resettlement and subsequently at ten-year intervals (in the so-called 'roster years').

Statutory tenants are better off than the former non-occupancy tenants, but life tenancy is inappropriate in a country where great stress is laid on inheritance, and tends to discourage improvements. Moreover, the Act of 1926, as a *quid pro quo* for the landlords, gave the latter a right to reacquire land for the purpose of introducing improved cultivation. This right has led to much litigation and has been abused. Landlords, asserting their intention to make improvements, resume land but subsequently relet it illegally at an enhanced rent. Or they exact illegal premiums (*nazranas*) or enhancements in rent by threats to resume. Moreover, although any further rise in rents has been limited, nothing has been done to reduce rents which are already excessive. Population is particularly dense and cultivators are exceptionally poor in this province.

The United Provinces' Banking Committee estimated that only 18 per cent. of the small peasant proprietors and tenants were in comfortable circumstances. Thirty per cent. have definitely 'uneconomic' holdings, and 52 per cent. can just manage in good years but not in bad. Writing before the great fall in agricultural prices which characterized the recent depression, the Committee concluded that 'the great majority of all cultivators either possess holdings at or slightly above the economic limit, or possess uneconomic holdings with a subsidiary occupation. In either case . . . though they can by unremitting toil make ends meet in a good year, they can put by no reserves against a bad year, and when such a year occurs, can only tide it over by borrowing.'

Elsewhere the distinction between tenants who had possessed customary occupancy rights and tenants-at-will was clearer, and there was no need to make a special rule. Hence the twelve-year rule was not applied in the Punjab or Oudh, and was only applied temporarily, in exceptional cases, in the Central Provinces. These provinces have their own tenancy Acts, by which tenants are protected against arbitrary ejection and enhancement of rent.

In provinces which are predominantly ryotwari, and hence where land settlements were made with the actual cultivators, similar tenancy legislation has not been considered necessary, except in the small areas where zamindari tenures prevail. In Madras the Rent Recovery Act of 1865 and in Bombay the Revenue Code of 1879 merely lay down rules providing, for instance, for written leases and the procedure for the recovery of rent and ejection. But the rise in the value of land during the nineteenth century has, in fact, led to the extensive leasing and sub-letting of holdings, so that the ryots responsible for the payment of land revenue are frequently no longer the actual cultivators of the land. Rack-renting has become a crying evil, and no adequate legislative protection has been accorded to sub-tenants, whose rents can be enhanced and who, having no rights of occupancy, can be evicted, e.g. on the expiry of the term of a written lease or after notice to quit if they have none.

Even from this short summary it can be seen that British rule, in general, and the land policy, in particular, set in force movements and processes which were neither intended nor foreseen. The introduction of peace and order, the growth of population, land settlements, and the greater certainty of assessments and recovery of land revenue and rent, led to larger total productivity, and a rise in land values incidentally involved a widespread loss of rights in the land, which necessitated remedial legislation. On the other hand, the population growth and rise in land values and rents tended, after a time, to reduce the burden of the land revenue



assessments, whilst the rate of assessment under the temporary settlements was progressively and deliberately reduced. For instance, in 1855 the Saharanpur rules fixed 50 per cent. of the 'net assets' as the maximum claim for Agra and Oudh, and this in practice became the accepted maximum for British India in general. Since then the legal assessment has been further reduced in some provinces, e.g. the United Provinces, whilst in most cases the actual demand is now substantially less. Land revenue has thus become a decreasing burden on agriculture, and the greater certainty of the British system has encouraged better cultivation.

The bases of assessment, though varying greatly in detail, are in principle either (in zamindari areas) a certain proportion of the rental values, which are taken to represent net assets, i.e. 'economic rent' or (in ryotwari areas) a direct valuation of net assets, which in practice, owing to lack of data, has introduced a large arbitrary element. The difficulty of direct measurement has led to increased reliance, even in ryotwari areas, upon rental values. But, owing to excessive pressure on the soil and competition for land, actual rents cannot fairly be taken to represent 'economic rent', but have been pushed up beyond that level. Investigations conducted under the auspices of the Punjab Board of Economic Inquiry reveal that many tenants, after paying rent and costs of cultivation, do not obtain an income from the land equivalent even to the earnings of agricultural wage-earners. In bad years their accounts show an actual deficit. This means that rents have been inflated, and are paid not from the surplus produce of the soil but from subsidiary occupations or from loans. Thus the position of the cultivators has become fundamentally 'uneconomic', leading to permanent indebtedness. In so far as land revenue is based on rental values, the former also becomes inflated and represents more than the nominal percentage on net assets.

In general, it can be concluded that land revenue no longer constitutes a heavy burden either on zamindars who let their land or on cultivating owners, whilst for tenants the high level of rents is a far more serious factor. Assessment of revenue is now moderate in most cases and has substantially fallen in relation to prices. The Taxation Inquiry Committee of 1925 estimated that between 1903 and 1924 the total revenue from this source rose only 20 per cent., as compared with a rise in prices of 117 per cent. Even the Congress report on agrarian distress in the United Provinces (1931) admitted that the land revenue demand in that province had not kept pace with either the rise in prices or enhancements in rent, and stated that whereas in 1898-9 revenue demand was about 50 per cent. of rental demand, by 1929-30 the ratio had fallen to 37 per cent.

It can be concluded that the main, though unexpected and undesigned, results of British rule and the land policy pursued have been to alter the status and economic position of various classes. Although the absolute and relative burden of land revenue has been reduced, to the benefit of landowners, the burden of rents and permanent indebtedness have greatly increased, whilst sub-tenants, owing to their liability to eviction and enhancement of rents, remain at the mercy of their landlords. Moreover, pressure of population, the laws of inheritance, widespread indebtedness, and the prevailing poverty have led to the progressive subdivision and fragmentation of holdings, which means that many agricultural families now possess holdings too small to provide them with the means of subsistence. In addition, monetary premiums and irregular cesses are still illegally exacted by many landlords, who threaten to evict unprotected tenants who refuse to meet their demands. A large number both of indebted tenant cultivators and of the growing body of wage-labourers are in a position of debt-slavery, i.e. they are bound respectively either to continue to cultivate the land for the benefit of their creditors, or to perform services for their master, in return for loans which they can seldom even hope to repay.

Many of these evils and the general prevalence of dire poverty may be attributed partly to physical conditions, in particular the uncertain rainfall, and partly to certain social customs and institutions, which have prevented physical and occupational mobility, hindered initiative, engendered the prevalent vices of resignation and inertia, and led to the inefficient use of labour and deficiencies in consumption. Caste still largely determines occupation and methods of production and consumption. The Brahman and the Rajput may not handle the plough or perform other menial 'unclean' tasks, whilst higher-caste women may not help in the fields. The joint-family system tends to prevent initiative and remove the spur to progress, although at the same time it provides support for the incapable and unfortunate. Prevailing diets are deficient in quality even when sufficient in quantity, whilst religious taboos engender waste of even the poor and insufficient animal products which are available. Hindu veneration for the cow, and, amongst the Jains, for the life even of insects and vermin, prevents improvements in the breeding and health of cattle and the destruction of obnoxious pests. The laws of inheritance, under existing conditions of population growth, lead to progressive subdivision of holdings and fragmentation. The mere size and illiteracy of the population presents a formidable propaganda problem, whilst the lack of 'improving landlords' encourages undue dependence upon the government. The ryot fears and dislikes



innovation and cannot afford to experiment. The result is that he continues to cultivate in the manner of his ancestors and produces crops notably poorer in quantity and quality than agriculturalists in competing countries. Under-employment on the land, inefficient and wasteful labour are almost universal evils. Seed selection is rarely practised, permanent improvements in the soil and in farm equipment are remarkable by their absence, by-industries are few, whilst the indiscriminate breeding of cattle and waste of manure (much of which is burnt as fuel) increase the pressure on the soil and reduce fertility. It is sometimes asserted that the government has been indifferent to these evils. Actually agricultural policy has been broadly based, especially since the beginning of this century. But the task is prodigious, particularly for an alien government, and it cannot be denied that the results have been disappointing.

The increase in total productivity, due largely to public works, the transformation of the famine problem, and the trend of land and tenure policy have already been discussed. There remain to be considered the attempts made to tackle the problem of indebtedness, to prevent the progressive alienation of land and the subdivision of holdings, and to introduce scientific agriculture.

The tendencies towards loss of holdings by the peasants and an increase in landless labourers have been connected with the problem of indebtedness as well as with changes in the land and tenure systems. The custom of borrowing, often on extremely onerous terms, is an ancient one in India, but has been greatly extended under British rule both by the greater need for loans and by the greater facilities for securing them. The need for loans has been augmented by the increasing pressure on the soil and by increased opportunities for productive investment. Credit facilities have increased with the rise in the value of land and with the stricter enforcement of the law, both of which encourage the mortgaging of land. Loans are required for productive purposes (for instance, to sink wells or purchase cattle), to meet current expenditure, or for unproductive social expenditure (for instance, on social ceremonies or litigation). Unfortunately borrowing for unproductive purposes predominates, and, with the tradition of honouring ancestral debts, tends towards a condition of permanent indebtedness. Money-lenders form a large and powerful class, which performs many functions essential to society, but which unfortunately is in a position to abuse its power by fraudulent practices and charging oppressive interest rates.

The Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900, which has been copied in Bombay, Oudh, and Bundelkhand, attempted to prevent loss of land to money-lenders by prohibiting the mortgaging and sale of land to non-agriculturalists. This measure was not altogether

successful, as it curtailed the supply of credit and raised the interest charges of agricultural money-lenders. Hence proposals to extend this kind of legislation were opposed, especially where money-lenders are predominantly members of agricultural castes. It has also been argued that restrictions on sale prevent land from passing to those who can use it best and can inflict hardship on owners of land, such as widows and the non-able-bodied, who cannot themselves cultivate. Legislation has also been proposed to prohibit the further subdivision of holdings, but opposition on social and religious grounds rendered this an impossible policy for an alien government. Provincial autonomy may, however, enable such legislation in the future. The problem of fragmentation has been tackled by co-operative societies for the consolidation of holdings, with considerable success in some areas, especially the Punjab. Dr. Mann's village-studies show that there is a natural tendency towards the formation of more compact holdings by the lease of contiguous plots, and he concludes that if the general position of agriculturalists could be improved, this particular problem might eventually solve itself.

The chief remedies so far adopted for the debt problem are the encouragement of the co-operative credit movement, usury laws, and the grant of State loans to agriculture on easy terms. It has already been concluded that the co-operative movement can work wonders, where it takes strong root, but that it has so far touched only a small proportion of the population. Neither the laws against usury nor the offer of governmental loans for productive purposes have had far-reaching results, largely because cultivators are not sufficiently conversant with the law and necessary procedure. Moreover, loans for productive purposes form only a minor aspect of the problem.

The Great Depression, which started in 1930, greatly aggravated the problem of indebtedness. The fall in prices halved the value of the agricultural output, whilst total indebtedness remained substantially unchanged. Provincial inquiries have subsequently been held, and in most provinces Debt Conciliation Acts have been passed which provide for a reduction in the capital sums involved and in unreasonable interest payments, and facilitate repayments by agreements between creditors and debtors. It is too soon to judge the efficacy of these measures, but at best they can only afford temporary alleviation, and the fundamental problem of how to enable the peasants to obtain a secure and decent subsistence from the soil has still to be solved.

The East India Company's agricultural policy consisted mainly of attempts to introduce exotic crops and varieties, such as American cotton. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the



government attempted more systematic encouragement of improved cultivation and of indigenous plants by the establishment of provincial Departments of Agriculture and the appointment of an Agricultural Adviser to the central government. This at first resulted mainly in the collection of information, practical success being largely confined to cotton cultivation. A real step forward occurred under Lord Curzon. A Central Institute of Agricultural Research has since 1904 undertaken systematic and continuous research in connexion with all the principal Indian crops, and with reference to soils, pests, manurial problems, animal breeding, nutrition and diseases, implements, and methods of cultivation. A number of specialized research institutions have been established throughout the country, and attempts have been made, through the provincial Departments and co-operative societies, to distribute better seed and spread a knowledge of scientific methods. The result has been the development of improved types and varieties of all staple crops, over 13 million acres being now sown with improved seed. The Royal Commission on Agriculture of 1928 focused attention upon the urgent need for reform and the vital problem involved, and led, amongst other things, to the establishment of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, which now co-ordinates research for the whole of India. The Banking Inquiry Committee (1931) emphasized the need for improvements in marketing organization and finance, and after the Provincial Economic Conference of 1934 a marketing scheme was launched. Marketing officers have been appointed at the centre and in several provinces, who are conducting surveys and have already published several reports. Reference has already been made to the recent adoption of various schemes for rural reconstruction and to the fact that the needs of agriculturalists now figure prominently in the programmes of all provincial governments. In the meantime experiments in district broadcasting, through the medium of the vernaculars, give hope that the problem of propaganda may before long be solved, if adequate revenue can be found. There is no doubt that broadcasting affords a method of reaching the masses and imparting information and instruction which, if thoroughly applied, might transform the whole problem.

The main tendencies of agricultural development since the introduction of British rule may now be briefly summarized. The area under cultivation was greatly extended during the nineteenth century, owing mainly to transport improvements, until practically all suitable land had been brought under cultivation. Little extension of area has occurred since 1900, and improvement must now be sought by increasing the yield per acre and the establishment of

by-industries to provide occupations and additional income for those who are primarily dependent upon the soil but are not continuously employed throughout the year. Crops have been improved in quantity and quality. Specialized production for commercial crops has greatly increased, self-sufficiency has declined, and India has been brought within the orbit of world markets and world prices. Local and seasonal price fluctuations have by these means been greatly reduced, but at the expense of increasing dependence upon world price trends and the trade cycle. The total quantity of agricultural produce has risen, and more valuable have tended to replace less valuable crops, but owing to increased pressure on the soil there has been a decline in acreage per head and in the average size of holdings.

These conclusions support the view that the economic results of British rule have been conflicting. Increased profitability in certain respects has been offset by losses elsewhere; economic improvements have sometimes been accompanied by social disadvantages. Railways and irrigation works have enabled extended and better cultivation, but the decay of indigenous industries has removed a former source of income and increased the pressure on the soil. The greater output has to be divided amongst greater numbers and has probably been accompanied by greater inequality of distribution. The burden of land revenue has fallen, but rents have risen, though recent legislation has favoured tenants and limited enhancements of rent. Sub-tenants and wage-labourers remain unprotected, but in periods of depression the latter fare better than tenure-holders, as wages are 'sticky'. The rise in land values has favoured landowners, but many have lost their land and those who remain tend to become functionless rent-receivers, who often move to the towns with a resultant drain of wealth from rural to urban areas.

#### THE GENERAL TREND OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The main lines of economic change in India and the stimuli involved by contact with the West and British rule since 1765 have now been reviewed. It has been seen that the activities of the British at first affected Indian economic life adversely, but that after about 1833 factors making for recovery and improvement tended to prevail, whilst after 1858, especially in the early twentieth century, the tempo of development became more rapid. The Great War interrupted this progress but stimulated industrial development and a more constructive economic policy, whilst social and economic reforms tended to correct earlier mistakes and to counteract the evil effects of the social disorganization engendered by rapid economic change.



It is clear that since 1765 'economic development' has occurred. Growing command over nature and an increase in the scale of organization and in division of labour are shown by the increased specialization of production, greater use of capital, the rise of large-scale manufacturing and mineral industries, increased use of machinery and modern methods of production, the extended use of money, and increased economic unification. Commercial production and an exchange economy tend to prevail, and there has undoubtedly been a change from simple to complex, from spontaneous to mechanical, and from homogeneous to heterogeneous. Total productivity and productive equipment and capacity have greatly increased. This is shown by the mere fact that India now supports an immensely larger population than could possibly have been kept alive in the eighteenth century.

Although statistics cannot be quoted for the period as a whole, a number of indices referring to the last half-century fully support these conclusions. It was not until the 'nineties that anything like complete agricultural returns were available for British India, whilst those for the Indian States are still very incomplete. British Indian crop estimates still tend to under-estimate output, but they show that since the 'nineties the area sown has increased from some 195 to 228 million acres, the area under forests from 54 to 89 millions, and the area under food-grains from 180 to over 200 millions. Yields have increased more than proportionately, except when the monsoon fails, owing to better seed and other improvements. Since 1900 the expansion of mineral and large-scale industrial production has been remarkable, although a counterbalancing, but unmeasurable, factor has been the decline in the indigenous industries. Between 1900 and 1932 the output of coal increased from 6 to 20 million tons, and of mineral oil (mainly in Burma) from 37 to 308 million gallons. Professor P. J. Thomas<sup>1</sup> has estimated that during the decade ending in 1932 the output of large-scale industries increased by 51 per cent. and that of agriculture by 15 per cent. In 1913 India imported three-quarters, and herself produced only one-quarter, of her consumption of mill-made piece-goods, but now the position has been more than reversed. Whereas in 1927-8 India only supplied 30 per cent. of her own steel consumption, in 1932-3 she supplied 72 per cent., and she now supplies still more. Twenty years ago India imported the bulk of her cement, matches, and refined sugar; now she supplies practically the whole home market.

Sir David Meek has prepared indices which show that since the beginning of the century agricultural, mineral, and industrial production and foreign trade have grown at a rate slightly greater

<sup>1</sup> *Population and Production* (Pamphlet) (1934), p. 7.

than that of population in the case of agriculture and trade, and substantially greater for mineral and industrial production. The most recent figures used refer to depression years, prior to the revival of 1936-7, and hence tend to under-estimate progress. Sir David Meek also refers to recent expansion in the number of small-scale industries.<sup>1</sup>

The improvement in productive equipment has been accompanied not only by a notable decline in deaths from famine, but also recently by a decline in infant mortality and in the general death-rate, so that the expectation of life has risen, although it is still only 26 years, as contrasted with 55 in England and Germany. Moreover, the trend towards increasing dependence upon agriculture has been checked since 1900, in the sense that industrial production has recently increased at a greater rate than agricultural output. Between 1891 and 1921 the number of factories increased fivefold, and the number of operatives employed therein from 316,000 to 1½ millions. Even since the depression large-scale industrial output has continued to grow. It would, however, be erroneous to conclude that India is firmly on the road to industrialization, or that large-scale industry will afford relief to the pressure of population. On the contrary, increased industrial output has been accompanied by a greater use of labour-saving technique, with the result that the numbers employed have remained practically stationary. Moreover, it has been estimated that, even on the impossible assumption that India manufactured for herself all goods which are at present imported, the additional demand for labour would not suffice to absorb the annual addition to the population, much less to provide an outlet for the vast surplus of under-employed labour on the land.

Despite her immense and heterogeneous resources India still suffers from serious drawbacks in the industrial sphere, in particular the high degree of localization of minerals and industrial power, the enervating climate, lack of industrial leadership, and grave defects in the spheres of organization and finance. Capital is scarce and dear, chiefly because of the superior attractions and security afforded by other uses, such as money-lending and land purchase. In addition, labour, though plentiful, is inefficient and untrained. The recent expansion of industrial output, owing to the protective policy, has been achieved at the expense of the cultivators, who have to pay more for what they buy and who are dependent upon world prices for what they sell. My own conclusion is that India cannot expect to proceed far or fast upon the road of large-scale industrial development and that intensification of

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, vol. lxxxiv, 1936; and *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, part iii, 1937.



protection would merely increase the profits of a small section of the population at the expense of the masses. India's crying need is for improvement in the output and consuming capacity of the rural population. Capital investment should therefore take the form of permanent improvements in the land, better housing, water-supply, drainage, and of other public facilities designed to promote efficiency and rural employment. Such investment, even if it did not at once pay directly, would soon yield returns in the form of increased health, efficiency, and taxable capacity.

Progress has been most remarkable with regard to the prevention and mitigation of the evil effects of failure of the monsoon. During the nineteenth century fluctuations in prosperity coincided primarily with variations in the rainfall. Hence periods of considerable prosperity and population growth alternated with eras of privation and loss of life. Since 1900 this primitive dependence upon nature has been to a great extent removed. On the other hand, India has been gradually drawn into the orbit of the world trade-cycle, and has hence become increasingly dependent upon forces over which she herself has little or no control.

#### THE STANDARD OF LIFE

Unfortunately it cannot be assumed that an improvement in output and equipment necessarily implies an improvement in the standard of life of the masses, even if we ignore unmeasurable social disadvantages, such as the proletarianization of an increasing proportion of the population.

Facts and figures pointing to an increase in total wealth and wealth per head during the last half-century have already been quoted. Confirmatory evidence is also supplied by a number of estimates of changes in *per capita* income since 1876, even though some of the estimates were intended to show how meagre the improvement had been. But these data make no allowance for changes in the distribution of incomes, and in any case only refer to recent decades. Statistical data with regard to the distribution of incomes are almost completely lacking, whilst the fact that different areas and classes have been differently affected, and affected at different times, makes generalization difficult and unrealistic. Experience in other countries subjected to commercialization and economic modernization suggests the likelihood of an increase in inequality of incomes. But in India there does not seem to have been any remarkable growth in the numbers of those who belong to the 'well-to-do' classes. The proportion (estimated at 5 per cent. in 1921) of the upper and middle classes to total population is exceptionally small, and a minor increase in the size or average incomes of these classes is unlikely to have affected substantially

the share of the total income going to that 95 per cent. of the population which constitutes the 'working-classes'. But important changes in the relative prosperity of different sections of the working-classes may well have occurred. In the absence of relevant statistical data all that can be attempted is to review the preponderant factors affecting the standard of life of some of the more important sections of the population during each of the periods into which we have divided Indian economic history since 1765.

With regard to the pre-Mutiny period little can be added to what has already been said. We concluded that even when production and trade revived, several important sections of the population, including handicraftsmen and small cultivators, remained depressed, and that by 1857 there was little evidence that the prevailing standard of life had more than regained the level attained before the disastrous disorders of the late eighteenth century. Price trends, which are usually taken as useful criteria of trends in prosperity, have been estimated, from very incomplete records, only for the Madras Presidency during this period. Professor Thomas has maintained that India as a whole, and Madras in particular, suffered from a long-drawn-out depression marked by decline in the price level from 1825 to 1854, due to currency shortage, a declining demand for Indian exports, and increased demand for money on account of the change over from a 'natural' to an 'exchange' economy.<sup>1</sup> But it is doubtful whether this conclusion is justified and whether it can be assumed that similar conditions prevailed in other provinces. It seems more realistic to suggest that the conception of a general price level had little relevance at that time. India had not yet been unified by modern means of transport, and prices remained strictly localized and subject to immense seasonal and local fluctuations. Moreover, many cultivators remained largely self-sufficing and paid their rents in kind, so that price variations were of little importance to them. In any case it is erroneous to assume that a rise (or a fall) in prices is necessarily associated with an improvement (or a decline) in the prosperity of the masses. Rapid and great price fluctuations in either direction cause commercial dislocation and insecurity and are to be deplored. But a gradual rise (or fall) benefits certain sections and injures others, the net result on the working-classes depending partly on the causes of price changes and partly on the number of those benefited as compared with those injured.

It is possible to be more explicit about the second half of the nineteenth century. An administrative report of 1889, surveying

<sup>1</sup> 'Economic Development in the Madras Presidency, 1825-1854', *Economic History Review*, November 1936.



the previous thirty years, concluded that landowners had gained greatly from the rise in land values and rent, the latter having increased between two- and threefold since 1858, and from reductions in rates of land revenue assessment; that the professional classes and traders were, on the whole, more prosperous; that tenant cultivators (to whom protection began to be extended in 1859) were better off except in certain areas, i.e. Bihar, Agra, and Oudh; that the wages of labourers employed in modern occupations, such as railway construction, had risen, though it must not be overlooked that prices, also, were rising; but that the indigenous industries continued to be severely depressed. These conclusions are in accordance with what might be expected from the history of the period. In general, the wealthier classes had benefited from trade expansion and higher land values, whilst all classes, except those engaged in the indigenous industries, obtained greater opportunities for profitable cultivation and employment. The report also gives evidence of increased consumption per head of such commodities as salt, sugar, tobacco, metal utensils, and miscellaneous manufactures, and refers to the great increase in imports of precious metals. Sir Richard Temple, writing in 1880, supported this view, and noted in particular the increasing difficulty of recruiting for the army owing to the rise in wages in other occupations.<sup>1</sup> Similar tendencies continued throughout the rest of the century, except that a series of exceptionally serious famines brought widespread suffering and a temporary lowering of the standard of life at the turn of the century. This accounts for the extreme pessimism and harsh criticism of government policy prevailing at this period. In 1900 it would, indeed, have been difficult to maintain that any improvement in the standard of life had been achieved within living memory.

During the second half of the century price statistics were published and an index of wholesale prices (based on 1873) was prepared. These show that from 1860 the price level tended to rise. Wage statistics were also published but were extremely unreliable and unrepresentative, whilst wage-earners formed only a small class. Then, as now, it appears that wages were strongly influenced by custom and changed less rapidly than prices.

In general, a rise in prices injures creditors and those with fixed incomes, but benefits debtors and profit-earners. Wages lag, but opportunities of employment and for passing into higher-paid grades of labour increase. Enterprise is encouraged and capital accumulates. Cultivators gain on their sales, but lose on their purchases. It is, therefore, usual to consider that in India, where

<sup>1</sup> *India in 1880* (1881), p. 401.

the number of fixed income receivers is exceptionally small and that of debtors exceptionally great, and where capital is urgently required, a rise in prices is on the whole beneficial. But due consideration must be given to the causes of rising prices and to the particular circumstances affecting the various classes, and generally it may be said that the causes and violence of price changes, and changes in relative prices, are of greater importance than the mere fact of a tendency to rise or fall.

During the nineteenth century the price level rose mainly because of increased demand for Indian products and the fact that Indian prices were brought into relation with world prices. This favoured producers, enterprise was encouraged, and markets expanded. The situation was similar during the pre-war period and again between 1923 and 1929. At these periods the rise in the price level probably, on balance, promoted prosperity. After 1900, apart from the conflicting tendencies of the war period (1914-18) and the crises of 1907 and 1921, favourable influences preponderated up to 1929. Considerable statistical evidence, referring to wages, prices, and (for the post-war period) the cost of living in various areas and occupations, shows that the standard of life rose during the pre-war period, in comparison with the nineteenth century, and that in 1929, despite the Great War and the record rate of population growth, the position and standard of life of cultivators and of industrial and other wage-earners, had definitely improved in comparison with the pre-war period.

This conclusion is supported by much circumstantial evidence. In the pre-war period more clothing was bought, houses in some areas improved, brass and other metals replaced coarse earthenware, more money was spent on railway travel, and expenditure on many miscellaneous articles increased. The increased consumption of articles of (comparative) luxury, such as sugar, tobacco, and spices, was quite remarkable. After the war, up to 1929, similar progress was made, except that the per capita consumption of piece-goods, which was drastically reduced during the war, had not yet exceeded the pre-war level.

Very unequal progress was recorded in different provinces. The Punjab exhibited the greatest progress, largely because of the extension of irrigation. Sir Malcolm Darling<sup>1</sup> described in 1925 the 'remarkable rise in the standard of life during the last 25 years', and said that, from being the poorest province, the Punjab had become the richest. More recently (1938) Mr. E. D. Lucas<sup>2</sup> has described the progress made during the last thirty years, and refers

<sup>1</sup> *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt* (1925), p. xii.

<sup>2</sup> 'Thirty Years of Advance and Emancipation', *The Ganga* (Hailley College Journal of Commerce and Economics), March 1938.



particularly to the improved position and greater freedom of women; the coming of the motor and the radio, providing new trade openings, as for instance, petrol stands and shops for spare parts and repairs; the increased study and application of science, as for instance, in public health and sanitation measures; the increased circulation of newspapers; the greater recognition of the value of elementary education; and increasing industrialization.

The set-back since 1929 cannot be denied. The sudden fall in agricultural prices naturally hit India hard. The depression was fundamentally a price depression, affecting primarily trade and the purchasing power of agriculturalists. There is no evidence that the area under crops or total agricultural output was reduced, except in particular areas dependent upon specialized crops, such as Bengal. Consumption of the necessities of life remained remarkably steady even at the depth of the depression, and there was general surprise at the resisting powers exhibited by the peasants.

The available evidences show that the effects on the standard of life of the masses were less serious than might have been feared. The peasants suffered, but their powers of adjustment—including an increase in self-sufficiency, the sale of gold 'hoards' at the enhanced price following the devaluation of 1931, and failure to pay rent, land revenue, and interest on loans—enabled them to carry on until better times began to return in 1934 and 1935. The fact that the pre-depression rate of population growth has continued since 1930 can only mean that the pressure on the standard of life, although often involving insolvency and loss of land, has not sufficed to cause a rise in the death-rate. But the problem of indebtedness has been greatly aggravated and has led to legislation in most provinces designed to reduce the capital sums involved and to modify interest payments.

To summarize, it can be said that the available evidence leads to the conclusion that during the nineteenth century productive capacity increased, but was probably not accompanied by any appreciable movement in the standard of life; that between 1900 and 1929 a definite improvement in the standard of life occurred; but that since 1929 this has been checked.

It cannot, however, be too strongly emphasized that this improved standard remains miserably low. Mr. Moreland's statement, made in 1917, sums up the situation even to-day:

'It is a matter of common knowledge that the standard of life in India is undesirably low; that whilst the masses of the people are provided with the necessities of a bare existence, they are in far too many cases badly housed and badly clothed, badly doctored and badly taught, often overworked and often underfed; and that the present income of the

country, even if it was equitably distributed, would not suffice to provide the population with even the most indispensable elements of a reasonable life.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Radhakamal Mukerjee has recently estimated that in 1935, whilst India's food requirements, allowing for the smaller dietetic needs of an Asiatic population in a tropical climate, amounted to 321.5 billion calories per annum, her actual supplies amounted to only 280.4 billions, so that, if the rest of the population had been properly fed, 48 million persons would have had no food at all.<sup>2</sup> Even if drastic modification were made in the details of his estimate, it is clear that the situation would still be most disquieting.

No solution has yet been found for the problems arising out of the increasing subdivision of holdings, increased pressure on the soil, excessive rent, and the intolerable burden of debt. It has sometimes been suggested that the position of industrial and plantation workers is even worse than that of cultivators, but this is no longer true. Industrial labour legislation has done much to improve conditions of work, and although wages remain extremely low judged by western standards, they provide better earnings than could be obtained in the areas of recruitment. The worst conditions prevail amongst workers in unregulated small-scale industries, where women and children still work disgracefully long hours under abominable conditions. But the Act of 1935 has extended legislation to seasonal industries, and it is hoped that further improvements will follow. Conditions of life in urban centres have not yet been correspondingly improved despite valiant efforts, although in some cases, e.g. Bombay city, a remarkable fall in infant mortality and the general death-rate has been achieved.

The outlook for the future remains dark. If India is to maintain an increasing population at a higher standard of life she will, under present-day world conditions, have to depend more upon internal improvements than upon any expansion of trade, and, as no striking developments in large-scale industry are to be anticipated, this means she will have to depend mainly upon rural reconstruction. But it is difficult to see how the peasants, the majority of whom are now tenants, not proprietors, can ever be placed in a sound position unless fundamental reforms are made in the land and tenure systems, and unless means are found not only of eliminating ancestral and existing unproductive debt, but also of preventing future accretions of such indebtedness.

<sup>1</sup> *Quarterly Review*, April 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Food Planning for Four Hundred Millions* (1938), p. 25.



THE ECONOMIC RESULTS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN  
WEST AND EAST

So far we have concluded that marked economic development, accompanied by some slight improvement in the general standard of life, has occurred in India since 1765. We must now inquire to what extent these changes can be attributed to western influences, in the sense that the latter introduced novel elements, and thereby diverted economic development from the lines that would have been followed under Indian rule.

Place of honour amongst 'diverting' influences must, in my opinion, be given to the *Pax Britannica* and all that it implies. It is certainly improbable that any one Indian ruler would have become strong enough to enforce order and efficient administration, and thus enable the construction of railways and other public works necessary to open up and unify the country, within as short a period as was required under British rule. If India had remained divided into a number of independent States, the same argument holds good. The British connexion undoubtedly provided administrators and business and scientific experts of a calibre not otherwise available. Without governmental backing Europeans and European capital could not have been attracted in equal numbers and at so small a cost respectively. In the absence of British rule an equally orderly, honest, and efficient administration and improved material equipment might eventually have been introduced, but the process would surely have been much slower. I therefore conclude that the primary economic result of British rule was to hasten the tempo of material development and economic unification, and shorten the period necessary for the commercialization and modernization of the country.

The introduction of peace, order, and security was, from the first, the primary objective of British rule, and later public works were deliberately planned. But the conscious policy entailed unforeseen problems. If, under her own rulers, India had been less well equipped and organized for modern economic life, she would also have contained a smaller and hence more manageable population. Social organization would have been more stable, and the stresses and tensions due to the need for adjustment to rapidly changing conditions would have been less violent. Whether or not British rule has been economically advantageous for India depends, in my opinion, upon whether more gradual modernization would have facilitated adjustment or merely deferred it. Upon this point I venture no opinion.

A comparison of the trend of economic development in British India and the Indian States might throw some light on the effects

of British administration, although it cannot be overlooked that the *Pax Britannica*, the example of British India, and the work of the British Residents profoundly influenced the Indian States as well as British India. It is, however, difficult to institute such a comparison, partly because the 562 Indian States vary enormously in size, resources, administration, and prosperity, partly because British control (for instance, in Hyderabad during the minority of the late Nizam, 1869-84, and in Mysore from 1831 until the rendition in 1881) has in some cases been so close as almost to approximate to the British Indian system. Until a scientific study of economic conditions and policy in at least a large proportion of the States has been undertaken, generalization is impossible. All that can be attempted is to call attention to certain facts and tendencies, with special reference to the larger States for which statistical and other relevant information is available.

Authorities agree that during the first half of the nineteenth century political and economic conditions were definitely inferior in the Indian States. According to Sir David Barr,<sup>1</sup> up to 1868 the latter were at least a hundred years behind British India, being especially backward as regards transport. They possessed not one mile of railways, trade was hindered by innumerable dues, and dacoities were still prevalent. Then real progress began and many of the reforms initiated in British India were imitated. Sir Richard Temple asserted in 1880 that improvements were gradually spreading to the States, which had become relatively well governed and had the advantage of a more flexible revenue system and a less expensive civil administration, but that the 'preponderance of testimony' favoured the British system.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter the facilities provided for the 'public school' education of the sons of ruling Princes led to a new Anglophile generation of rulers, which had absorbed the philosophy of progress and the conception of benevolent autocracy. Sir David Barr attributed the great progress made between 1868 and 1908 to the expert and tactful advice of British Residents, the extension of public works, the influence of the example of British India, the periods of direct management, and the education of the chiefs; and he observed that the people of the States did not wish to exchange the autocratic régime of the latter for the very different system of British India.

The period during which the more progressive States have become at least on a par with British India as regards efficient administration and economic development appears to have been at the turn of the century. Sir Sidney Low said in 1906 that a few

<sup>1</sup> 'Progress in the Native States, 1868-1905', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 20 March 1908.

<sup>2</sup> *India in 1880* (1881), pp. 64-5.



years previously a Maharaja looked upon his State as a private estate to be ruled for his own benefit and profit, but that ideas had changed and reform was in the air.<sup>1</sup> In Hyderabad progress since 1911, when the present Nizam ascended the throne, has certainly been remarkable, and includes a co-ordinated scheme of road and rail transport, city improvements, the establishment of the Osmania University, a sound financial system, the agricultural marketing scheme of 1931, great educational progress, and the use of broadcasting for rural reconstruction. Dr. Mann, in 1933-4, noted the great progress during the past thirty years, but considered there was still leeway to be made up.<sup>2</sup> Population is less dense in the States as a whole, and there is still room for the extension of cultivation. Many rulers still hold large private estates; in Hyderabad, for instance, one-third of the area still constitutes the private domain of the Nizam and his nobles. Mineral resources and industries are only beginning to be developed, and in Hyderabad only 5 per cent. of the area is irrigated.

Mysore is remarkable as the first State to make serious efforts to associate the people with the administration through the advisory Representative Assembly and Legislative Council established in 1881 and 1907 respectively, the Economic Conference instituted in 1911, and the revival of *panchayats*. The State has played a notable part in economic development. A Forest Department was established in 1864, the first hydro-electric scheme in India was constructed in connexion with the Kolar gold-fields in 1903, and co-operation was started in 1905. The government has a sandalwood oil monopoly and has undertaken or encouraged sericulture, the soap industry, sugar cultivation, porcelain works, improved hand-spinning and weaving, and the Bhadravati ironworks. The conclusion is that until recently the States lagged behind British India but are now catching up, the most progressive being reported as at least as prosperous as neighbouring British India areas. This conclusion is supported by the reversal of the population growth and trend of migration, which since 1921 has been greater in the States and from British India to the States, respectively. It has still to be seen whether or not a transition to democratic government can be achieved in the States, and, if not, what effect this will have on economic life.

If it be admitted that British rule has hastened the tempo of economic change, it must next be asked whether or not the economic policy pursued has been appropriate and beneficial, and to what extent existing economic defects and problems could have been avoided. All must admit that the policy pursued has not been

<sup>1</sup> *Vision of India* (1906), p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> *Report on Economic Conditions in Hyderabad for 1933-4*.

perfect and that mistakes have been made. But Indian rule would not have been perfect either, although the mistakes would probably have been different. The most fruitful method of approach is to consider the main charges brought against the economic policy of the government, on the assumption that such criticism indicates approximately the policy that might have been pursued under Indian rule, although in reality it by no means follows that the formulation of policy would have lain in the hands of those who have been the most prominent critics of the government.

In general terms, the indictment is that by exploitation and a drain of wealth from India to England, combined with a burdensome land and taxation system, an unnecessarily expensive civil and military administration, and a selfish fiscal, financial, and currency policy, India has been denuded of wealth, forced into undue dependence upon agriculture, and prevented from maintaining indigenous or establishing new industries. Neglect of education and technical training is said to have restricted Indian enterprise and distorted the trend of production and trade.

The abuses of the early days of Company rule, the defects in land policy, and the step-motherly treatment of the indigenous industries can only be admitted and deplored. It is also true that, largely owing to the increased population, pressure on the soil increased and the results of failures of the monsoon became more conspicuous. But some of these problems were, at least partially, the incidental results of social improvements, whilst attempts were made to remedy them, in some cases with signal success, when they became obvious. The policy pursued has, in most respects, shown progressive improvement. British interests and belief in *laissez-faire* combined in indeterminable proportions to determine the industrial policy or lack of policy. Lancashire interests and humanitarianism combined to stimulate industrial legislation. But eventually the more altruistic motives prevailed. Discriminating protection and industrial labour legislation have done something to assist industry and protect the worker. Tenancy legislation, a reduction in the rate of land revenue assessment, and agricultural research have lightened the lot of the peasant. Civil and military expenditure and taxation per head are not high in comparison with other countries, although they remain grievously high in relation to capacity to pay. Taxation per head rose, it is true, from Rs. 2. 4a. per head in 1891-2 to Rs. 4. 1a. 9p. (or Rs. 5. 5a. 6p. including land revenue) in 1929-30. With the depression it fell to Rs. 3. 9a. 10p. (or Rs. 4. 10a. 10p. including land revenue) in 1933-4, although it rose again slightly thereafter. But even so it is not high in comparison with other countries. It would indeed be more relevant to suggest that taxation has been too low, in the



sense that production and prosperity could have been increased by greater expenditure upon nation-building objects.

Famine policy has been a conspicuous success. Even Mr. Lajpat Rai admitted that the famine relief administration deserved 'ungrudging praise',<sup>1</sup> although he alleged that preventive work had been neglected and that India needed more irrigation works and fewer railways. It is unnecessary to repeat here the arguments in favour of the railways or the reasons why irrigation cannot be indefinitely extended. It is obviously fallacious to suggest that because certain irrigation works, chiefly in the Punjab, have paid handsome profits, similar returns could be obtained from works in other areas.

The evils of the 'drain' up to about 1813 have already been admitted, and it has been suggested that although a large excess of exports of merchandise again developed later in the nineteenth century, the modern phenomenon is differently caused and not symptomatic of substantial exploitation. Far and away the largest item in the 'home charges' is interest on debt. It cannot be denied that part of the Indian debt was burdensome and unjust, India, for instance, being made to pay for military expeditions undertaken for imperial reasons. But in this sphere, again, time has brought alleviation. By the end of the nineteenth century the greater part of the 'unproductive' debt had been repaid, and had it not been for the World War, it would have been completely eliminated. To-day 83 per cent. of the total Indian debt, in England and in India, is 'productive', i.e. it consists of loans for productive purposes such as railways and irrigation works, and as such constitutes no burden but brings in more than it costs.

It is impossible to discuss here the technical aspect of the currency and exchange policy of the government. Controversy has concentrated round one or two critical periods, in particular the late nineteenth century and post-war periods. In each case the decisions reached resulted from a choice between evils, rather than between good and evil, i.e. it was a question of the net balance of advantage; and it can at least be said that few countries experienced less currency dislocation and instability than India as a result of the Great War. At the present day attention is being increasingly directed to land and tenancy problems. The policy hitherto pursued is subjected to hostile criticism, and it is urged that fundamental reforms are required if the prosperity of the peasants is to be assured, and if the way is to be paved for substantial rural reconstruction.

It can only be concluded that the economic results of western contacts and British rule have been complex and conflicting.

<sup>1</sup> *England's Debt to India* (1917), p. 277.

Advantages and disadvantages have been involved. The policy pursued has brought benefit to some and injury to others. Some of the difficulties arose inevitably from the necessity for adjustment to changing circumstances; some could, no doubt, have been avoided by wiser counsels. But the difficulties confronted should not be belittled. The economic problem of the future may be conceived as being whether or not India can achieve complete economic modernization, not in the precise form to which we have become accustomed in the West, but by the adaptation of western material and mechanical improvements to the Indian environment. In the meantime, comfort can be taken from the fact that British rule is accused by some critics of favouring the rich and by others of hindering Indian capitalistic enterprise. Notwithstanding his hostility to British dominion, Mr. Lajpat Rai has said that 'British rule in India has its brighter side. Young India has drunk deep from the springs of liberty and the rights of man, as embodied in English history and literature; it has imbibed the spirit of modern civilization, epitomized in the activity and energy of the West; it is learning that fundamental law of nations, "self-preservation is the law of life".'<sup>1</sup> Again, an impartial observer, Professor D. A. Buchanan, of the United States, has said that 'in maintaining peace, unifying the country, developing communications and setting up a standard of integrity and industry' the government 'has accomplished more than could have been expected of any other government, Indian or foreign, during this period'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *England's Debt to India* (1917), p. 338.

<sup>2</sup> *The Development of Capitalist Enterprise in India* (1934), p. 454.



## CHAPTER VIII

# THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC AND INDIA

### INTRODUCTION

CHRISTIAN influence, which has been at work in India since British rule began, has been direct, through the agency of Christian missions, and indirect, through contact of the Indian peoples with the administration, aims, and methods, the education, literature, and mode of life of a civilization which owes much to Christian thought and principles.

An estimate of direct Christian influence is comparatively easy. For reasons which will emerge as we proceed, it must be preceded by the far more difficult examination of indirect influence. This in turn must be determined by our conception of the Christian influence at work in the civilization with which British rule brought India into contact. To what extent does that civilization depend for its strength on distinctively Christian life and doctrine? What does it owe to forces that are independent of religion or common to the higher forms of all religions? That India was awakened and strengthened by certain elements in the civilization with which British rule familiarized her is admitted freely in India to-day. We shall not forward the Christian cause, or promote friendly relations between the Christian and non-Christian worlds in India to-day, by claiming for the exponents of Christianity a larger share in the social advancement of India than the history of civilization would justify.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the peoples of India, reduced ethically and socially by the events of the preceding century to a lower level than that found in any preceding stage of their recorded history, came under the influence of a nation whose social advance had undoubtedly been inspired largely by the Christian faith. Its acceptance of that faith and the social results thereof had been due not to its intrinsic superiority, but to historical and geographical circumstances which differentiated it from the 'heathen' world. The England which came into contact with India in the nineteenth century was not essentially a Christian England, as England, dominated by the Catholic Church in the thirteenth century, or as England, passionately absorbed in religious discussion in Tudor and Stuart times, might be accounted Christian. Other forces, the humanism which dated from the Renaissance, and the liberal rationalism propagated by the French Revolution, had been at work for some time. Such forces, though not incompatible with the Christian faith, were clearly

distinguishable from it. Methodism and the Evangelical revival in the Anglican and Free Churches played their part in the India of the first half of the nineteenth century. It was not only Wilberforce, and missionaries such as Carey, Duff, and Wilson, who showed India the mighty works that a lively faith produces. There were scores, perhaps hundreds, of civil and military officers, such as the Lawrences, the Grants, Edwardes, Thomason, and Outram, who made no secret of the faith that dominated their actions. But there were others, such as Bentinck, Macaulay, and Dalhousie, who, though at heart pious and orthodox Christians, were known to India and remembered in India as exponents of the enlightened liberalism, the humanitarianism, that was simultaneously at work in England, rather than of the Christian faith that supplied their motive power and confidence but was not explicit in their pronouncements. The nervousness which impelled the supreme government during this period to avoid all semblance of official patronage of Christianity or of hostility to other religions in India was responsible for action, or for failure to take action, in excess of what the inevitable 'neutrality' of government demanded, and encouraged the belief that the social reform, somewhat timidly promoted by British rulers, had no religious force behind it.

This conviction was strengthened in the latter half of the nineteenth century and during this century as the western world, perturbed by the growth of the biological sciences, by anthropological research, and by a new and more enlightened study of non-Christian cultures and religions, sent out to India an ever-increasing number of civil servants, military officers, and merchants, brought up, it is true, in a 'Christian' atmosphere, but unable to distinguish what was fundamentally Christian in that atmosphere, inspired vaguely by the Christian faith and not dissenting from it, but with the Englishman's instinctive dislike of open profession, strengthened by vagueness regarding that faith and by a growing suspicion that there was more in other religions than had been supposed. Simultaneously, other motives for social reform than those supplied by Christianity were making themselves felt among the enlightened leaders of non-Christian India. Nationalism, the urge towards political independence, assumed religious force. Social and economic reform were seen to be the necessary foundations of national unity and independence. Racial pride, resentment at previous disparagement and neglect of Indian cultures and languages, a growing recognition of oriental possibilities fostered by the development of Japan, induced a tendency to borrow as little as possible from the western world, or at any rate to minimize the recognition of what the East owed to the West. From the West must come the sciences and arts required for



material strength and wealth. From the West also must come a knowledge of modes of political and social life that had given strength. But Christianity, which they had not learned to associate organically with those modes of life, was an exotic religion. In the economic life and international relations of the western world the teaching of Christ, which the Churches were supposed to perpetuate, seemed to play no part. In India the strife caused by mutual antagonism of sectarian religions was more patent than the value of a clearly defined and institutionally supported religious creed.

We shall try below to describe and account for changes effected or now being made in the social structure that are in accordance with what we believe to be essentially, if not exclusively, Christian principles. And in so doing we shall try to distinguish evidence of directly Christian influence, exercised through Christian missions, from evidence of characteristics not distinctively Christian and discernible in the other great religions and the varied cultures of India. For the reasons given above we shall not try to estimate precisely what we have been unable to define, the indirect Christian influence exerted by a 'Christian' civilization made known through British rule and western education. We can only say that even if, as we believe, these changes, which are promoting the social welfare of India, have been due in large part to contact with those elements of western civilization which are distinctively Christian, they have been effected in a way that has obscured their Christian origin. So many other forces have been at work that educated Indians who have not come under direct Christian influence, and some who have come under such influence, dissociate these changes from any form of organized or institutional religion. The ethical teaching of Christ, thanks mainly though not entirely to Christian missions, is well known and greatly respected in India. If a Hindu or Muslim wishes to condemn a course of action he frequently calls it 'unchristian'. But this in itself implies neither acceptance nor recognition of the Christian Churches, and it is accompanied by ignorance of, and lack of interest in, the Christian interpretation of Christ's life and teaching. The non-Christian world is concerned solely with the ethical principles of Christianity and the practical outcome of these principles. From this pragmatic point of view the educated non-Christian, though he reveres the personality of Christ, is not disposed to attach a unique value to his life or teaching. National or racial feeling, combined in the case of the Hindu with a very strong tendency to religious tolerance and eclecticism, encourages the idea that Christian principles are to be found in non-Christian religions and that their application depends in no way on acceptance of a particular faith. Among the leaders

of Indian life and thought to-day the passion for social advancement is not impaired by the absence of a distinctively Christian motive. Whether the forces by which they are animated are sufficient to ensure active support among the masses of the population, as education spreads, is a question that lies outside the scope of our inquiry. The absence of such support is conspicuous at present. Nor is it for us to inquire whether authority other than that of the Christian religion can inspire that respect for the rights of the individual, as distinct from the rights of the State, that treatment of minorities within the State, and that conception of international obligations and justice, which the western democracies recognize as essential conditions of human progress.

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF INDIAN LIFE AND THOUGHT IN RELATION TO CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES

In all forms of civilization there are elements which are clearly inconsistent with essentially Christian principles. What, it may be asked, are the features of Indian life and thought that are distinctively non-Christian? And to what extent are the efforts which are being made by enlightened Indians to amend or remove these features inspired by the Christian faith?

To the thoughtful and enlightened Hindu the dominance of caste in the Hindu social structure is not only a serious obstacle to social progress; it is contrary to ethical principles which he appreciates and understands. To the professed and sincere Christian caste as enforced by Hindu orthodoxy is contrary to the will of God. The brotherhood of all men follows from the fatherhood of God, revealed in the life and teaching of Christ. The value of each human soul is absolute and not relative to social status.

The caste framework of Hindu society is constantly being modified by circumstances beyond the control of Hindu orthodoxy. But such adaptation is dictated by practical or economic needs, not by conscience or ethical standards. Criticism of group or caste ethics is not forbidden, but nonconformity is sternly penalized. There had been much criticism and incitement to nonconformity before Christian influence was brought to bear on India. The teaching of Gautama involved a conception of society antagonistic to contemporary Brahmanism. The record of Hindu saints and seers contains much that is inconsistent with caste. Kabir and Nanak protested against it. Muslim influence was hostile to it. From the beginning of the nineteenth century it has been fiercely attacked by Hindus, individually or in organized societies, who have continued to claim membership of the Hindu fold and resented any suggestion of Christian influence. There is in fact much in the caste system against which the dominant tolerance and



sensitive kindliness of the Hindu mind naturally reacts. It was these characteristics that made the social teaching of the Gospels so attractive to the Hindu, leading those who were educated to search their own scriptures and hagiography for similar teaching. What they did not attempt to do, for they were concerned only with practical and social needs and with the emotional side of ethical questions, was to connect the social teaching and practice of Christ with his essentially religious teaching or with the theological interpretation of his life. Nor did they seek to discover whether the ethical principles by which they were animated were equally dependent on, and equally bound up with, the religious tenets of Christian and Hindu orthodoxy, or whether there were any deep-rooted convictions underlying Hindu thought and philosophy that strengthened the bulwarks of caste.

It is surprising that they made no such inquiries. The failure of Buddhism to establish itself in India, and the fact that a reformer such as Nanak was compelled to secede with his followers from the Hindu fold, obviously suggests some element in Hindu thought that stiffens resistance to attacks on caste, something deep-rooted that is not merely the result of superstition, ignorance, or selfishness. It may be true that caste does not owe its origin to religion. But undoubtedly it acquired before long a religious sanction. The vital connexion between caste and the essentially Hindu doctrine of Karma is generally admitted. Belief in transmigration is firmly implanted in the Hindu mind; with this has been associated for centuries the conviction that social status is determined by the nature of a man's life in his previous existence. Consequently it is impious and vain for him to try to emerge from the status into which he is born, or for others to assist such efforts. A man's whole duty in life, his *Dharma*, is conformity with the rules and standards of his caste. A religion that challenges the theological assumptions on which caste is supported is better armed against its tyranny than a refined form of Hinduism.

But before the close of the nineteenth century ideas and aspirations that were destined to assume the compelling power of a religion had captured the mind of enlightened India, and furnished weapons against caste which were not in the armoury of refined Hinduism. It became clear that caste stood in the way of national unity, that it was an obstacle to economic advance, and that it provided strong arguments to those who opposed the grant of political self-government to India. Long before any idea of Indian nationalism had been formulated, before political aspirations had emerged, an attack on caste from the purely secularist point of view had been instigated by David Hare, Derozio, and other reformers associated with the Hindu Vidyalaya, the first

educational institution in India that aimed at western education divorced from all religious foundations.

We are reminded by the Indian census report of 1931 that 'the conditions of modern life have broken down the idea that contact with certain castes involves pollution. . . . The use of conveniences such as trains and trams necessitates a relaxation of the rule that certain castes pollute by touch . . . there is a tendency to relax the rule of pollution by touch in the case of members of untouchable castes who do not pursue untouchable avocations'. Economic necessity or ambition is leading educated Brahmans to careers in such industries as the leather trade, which fifty years ago would have been regarded with horror. Intercourse with Europeans and social entertainment associated with political or economic conferences are bringing together men and women of all castes and no caste. There are Christian missionaries who, accepting the general belief that caste is the strongest obstacle to the spread of the Christian faith, believe it will yield to forces not essentially Christian.

But the census report quoted above reminds us that so far 'little effective has been accomplished in the way of removing untouchability in its real sense. . . . The water they touch is still undrinkable, the food they touch becomes impure, and they are not admitted to places of worship or to restaurants, nor will the ordinary barbers serve them.' Admitting with the writer of the report the impetus given to reformers by Mr. Gandhi's heroic efforts, and the manifestly more tolerant attitude of the younger generation, particularly the student population, we cannot ignore the bitter antagonism aroused in all centres of Hindu orthodoxy by Mr. Gandhi's efforts and the deep gulf between the enlightened portion of the population and the uneducated masses. The Indian statesmen who are striving to enlist the co-operation of the masses in schemes for the common development will no doubt promote the outcaste movement. But it would be premature to say at present that the non-religious forces referred to above are more effective than the direct influence of Christian missions which will be described below.

Another obstacle to social progress on Christian lines which has often been adduced as a distinctive characteristic of Hindu life and thought is the position assigned to women in the Hindu social structure. It would certainly be wrong to regard this position of inferiority as essentially and uniquely a product of Hindu thought and life, in the sense that caste is such a product. Early Hindu literature and history reveal Hindu women occupying a far more honourable position and exercising a far more useful influence than would have been possible throughout most of the nineteenth



century. Hindu literature, particularly the *Ramayana*, records an attitude towards women not merely chivalrous but fully conscious of their capacity for social service. The removal of the heavy burdens imposed on them, and particularly on widows, and their equipment for national as well as domestic work, have always been urged by the reformers of Hinduism from within.

Nevertheless, very serious obstacles to women's advancement are most certainly the inevitable results of the Hindu social structure and the family system, as established with religious sanction at the beginning of our period. Infant marriage, suttee, the ban on widow remarriage, and the harsh treatment of widows are very closely associated with Hindu beliefs. Even here some qualification is needed. There are Brahman groups, for instance, that permit remarriage of widows. But the widespread agitation in orthodox circles against the Sarda Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 shows the strength of the religious sanction for social abuses that the Act sought to remove. It extended far beyond the ignorant masses to educated sections of the population. No doubt humanitarian instincts, political and economic motives, and a desire to put themselves right with the outside world would have led Indian leaders, without any outside influence, towards the emancipation of women. But historically it was the Christian missions alone that achieved substantial success during the greater part of our period. Though there have been, in recent times, many Hindu societies doing good work in this field, it may at least be doubted whether without Christian influence the economic and political forces, together with the general influence of industrial and material development, would have been as effective in the campaign for women's advancement as they have been in the movement against caste.

Some students of Hinduism find in its thought and literature an attitude of mind which is essentially hostile to any kind of social reform and antithetic to the Christian basis of progress. Hindu religion, it is said, is in its highest form 'other-worldly', transcendent, wholly preoccupied with thought (*jnana*) and feeling (*bhakti*), and not concerned with action on the lower plane of an illusory world. God is beyond good and evil. The aim is escape from a world of suffering and frustration by putting away desire of any kind, even the desire to help others and to put the world right, and by absorption in the real sphere of pure thought, remote from all practical activity. So long as man is on the wheel of life, even if by rebirth he advances to higher life, he is separated from God. In post-Vedantic thought the passive virtues associated with the ethical doctrine of *Ahimsa* (self-restraint, abstention) are more emphatically proclaimed than the aggressive virtues. Even the

*Bhagavad-gita*, with all its insistence on the performances of duty appropriate to one's station in life, insists on the absence of all passion and desire, on complete disinterestedness. The Hindu incarnations imply no necessary concern of God with human affairs. Though Rama is God in human form with a real ethical purpose, Krishna is often God taking his pleasure in a world created for his sport, free from ethical purpose.

It is easy to exaggerate the importance and influence of this attitude, which is certainly not characteristic of such leaders of Hindu thought to-day as Sir S. Radhakrishnan or of an essentially Hindu worker such as Mr. Gandhi. The pessimistic apathy prevalent among the masses is perhaps due to climatic conditions, a low standard of living, and lack of education rather than to their philosophy. The temple ceremonies and pilgrimages in which they participate have an exhilarating effect, affording some relief from the sombreness of their life, but suggesting no escape from its passions and desires. The hopeful vigour that distinguishes Christian village communities from outcaste settlements may be due largely to economic and educational causes. The ready response of the Indian villager to political agitation that affects his material well-being suggests no lack of interest in the things of this life. The hopeful agitation of the politically backward section of the outcaste community, still influenced by Hindu rather than Christian modes of thought, shows no sign of the pessimism which some associate with Hinduism. It is arguable that confidence in the possibility of progress has spread, by example rather than precept, from the Christian to the Hindu communities; it may be doubted whether the masses of India can, like the political and social reform leaders, be roused to any action not immediately calculated to advance their material interests by humanitarian or patriotic motives divorced from all religion. But there are no grounds at present for saying that the Hindu religion is essentially such as to nullify all desire for progress, or that Christian confidence is indispensable for such progress.

It would be difficult to detect any essential elements in the Sikh religion that are peculiarly hostile to social progress or likely to yield only to distinctively Christian influences. The vigorous and enlightened Parsi community has shown that the war between good and evil which their religion emphasizes can be waged effectively in Indian social life.

The backwardness of the Muslim community in India is associated by some with the admitted failure of Christian missions in India to win many converts, and is sometimes attributed to distinctive characteristics of Islam. But exaggeration of such features is common and dangerous. Belief in the verbal inspiration of the



Koran no doubt impedes a departure from some practices, now regarded as harmful, that it is supposed to ordain or countenance. But there are many Muslims in India who combine active zeal for reform with a reputation for orthodoxy, and there is a school of Islamic thought that encourages the evolution of doctrine and an interpretation of the Koran consistent with the views of social reformers. The fatalism that is by some supposed to be a peculiar check to progress in this community is by no means confined to Islam and has never checked other activities of orthodox Muslim statesmen or generals. Countries that have been long under Islamic rule have shown recently a readiness to follow the lead of strong personalities bent on social reform. Though the Koran seems to the lay reader to emphasize the inferiority of women, and to sanction seclusion, polygamy, and easy divorce, those who explain away these features of the Koran are not condemned as heretics. The brotherhood of all the faithful, though not so comprehensive as the brotherhood of all mankind taught by Christ, is consistent with his teaching, is more effectively realized than in many so-called Christian circles, and is an effective instrument of social service which has impressed the Hindu world. The efficacy of prayer, alms, and fasting is recognized alike in Christianity and Islam. The revelation of one all-powerful and all-merciful God who intervenes in human history inspires the Muslim as well as the Christian with a motive and with confidence. The rigidity of Islamic monotheism seems an almost insuperable bar to the acceptance of the Christian doctrine of the divinity of Christ. For this reason, and because mission schools and colleges have been used far less by Muslim than by Hindu pupils, distinctively Christian influence has been less felt in the Islamic than in the Hindu world. The stimulating influence of western civilization has been less apparent because the advantages of western education have not been so widely recognized as in other communities. The reasons for this lack of social progress are partly cultural and only partly religious. Muslims who have been soundly educated find in their religion no obstacle to social progress. Though some Muslim reformers acknowledge their debt to the ethical teaching of Christ, that teaching was perhaps more needed and has been more deeply appreciated in the Hindu world.

#### NON-CHRISTIAN REFORM MOVEMENTS

The account given by J. N. Farquhar in *Modern Religious Movements in India* of the many social reform movements and societies in non-Christian and non-official circles shows that they were more strongly influenced by Christian teaching and example in the early part of our period than in the latter, and that in the early part

such influence was more frankly acknowledged. As years passed racial or national feeling tended to emphasize the value of 'Indian' religions, while pre-occupation with political and economic interests, combined with a desire for national unity, and a growing fear of superstition brought all forms of religion into discredit. But the recognition of ethical values emphasized in Christian teaching has persisted throughout.

The first great Hindu reformer, Ram Mohan Ray (1772-1833), admitted his great debt to Carey and his Serampore colleagues, as well as to what he had learned in English literature and English society. But he acknowledged also his debt to Islam. In religious thought he was an eclectic, and his main aim was to extract from all religious teaching what was rational and ethically useful. He remained, so far as possible, faithful to Indian traditions, and did not formally repudiate caste. He disliked the radical attitude of David Hare and Derozio. The Brahmo Samaj, which was the outcome of his work, was doctrinally similar to Victorian Unitarianism, and counted among its early champions Debendranath Tagore, who explicitly repudiated Christian influence and urged the refinement of distinctively Hindu thought and worship. Keshab Chandra Sen was strongly influenced by Christian mysticism before his belief that he was the divinely appointed interpreter of 'the new dispensation' made him a law unto himself. The zeal of the Brahmo Samaj for western education and marriage reform has been real and effective, and its opposition to caste prejudice sincere. But it has suffered from fissiparous tendencies. It has been essentially an intellectual movement, and its appeal has not been so widespread or influential as that of societies or persons who have propagated emotionally a religious, racial, or political creed.

Reform on distinctively Hindu lines, begun by Debendranath Tagore, was carried forward by Ramakrishna Paramhansa (1834-86), a mystic who owed much to the record of Christian mystics such as St. Theresa, as well as of Hindu saints. He was uninfluenced by rationalism or western education. Though the popular accounts of his life were influenced by the Gospel stories, his best-known follower, Swami Vivekananda (1862-1902), himself a mission college student, initiated and popularized in the western world as well as in India the idea that the East is more 'spiritual' than the West, and that Hinduism is the greatest of all religions because of its catholicity, tolerance, and absorptive capacity. The Ramakrishna Mission which he founded aimed at social work on distinctively Hindu lines.

This exaltation of Hinduism was carried a stage farther on lines antagonistic to Christianity by the Theosophical movement, which



began in India in 1878. Though theosophy outside India proclaimed that there is no religion higher than truth, and tried to discover truth in all religions, its development in India under Madame Blavatsky and Mrs. Besant was a protest against any 'exotic' religion, such as Christianity, and a fervent patronage of the religion into which Hindus were born. Mrs. Besant's manifold activities embraced most useful social and educational work on western lines, sympathetic treatment of outcastes, and systematic provision for Hindu religious instruction. But much of her defence of Hinduism seemed to enlightened Hindus, as well as to Christians, reactionary and superstitious. Though her active support of Indian nationalism ensured for a time widespread personal popularity, her influence, and that of theosophy generally, gradually declined.

Meanwhile the Arya Samaj, founded in 1875, was aiming with more consistency, and less embarrassed by erratic genius, though with equal antagonism to Christianity, at social reform on supposedly orthodox Hindu lines. The founder Dayanand Saraswati (1824-83) owed perhaps less to Christian influence than any other nineteenth-century reformer of Hinduism. A Sannyasi in early life, he was a champion of Hinduism pure and undefiled, with nothing of the eclectic in him. He was an ardent but not a critical scholar. He found in Vedic thought and feeling, to which alone he professed obedience, more perhaps than other scholars have found to support his hatred of superstition, idolatry, caste intolerance, and the evils of the Brahman's marriage code. The way to freedom of the Hindu race lay in a purged Hindu religion. The Samaj, without departing from his principles, has seen and realized the advantages of western education. Its Anglovedic College in Lahore, where a 'western' curriculum is combined with Hindu religious teaching, its Gurukala at Hardwar, where the study of Hindu literature and traditions and the conduct of a school life on ascetic Hindu lines are influenced by western educational methods, and its girls' schools have given social reform a religious note sufficiently free from 'foreign' influence to satisfy racial pride. Its popularity has been strengthened by its active sympathy with political aspirations.

Religious nationalism played a considerable part in the political disturbances of India for thirty years of our period, particularly in the Maratha country and Bengal. B. G. Tilak enlisted reactionary superstition in his campaign against the British government, and encouraged the veneration of Sivaji as the heroic leader of a Hindu theocratic state and the cult of the popular Maratha deity Ganpati (Ganesh), who was associated with nationalist ideas. In Bengal the cult of Kali as a symbol of aggressive and vindictive nationalism was advocated. Christianity was condemned with

other symptoms of alien rule in the early stage of the Swadeshi movement.

The emergence of Mr. Gandhi in the Indian political world strengthened the connexion of politics with the Hindu religion by the presentation of that religion, free from reactionary superstition, in a form that did not repel rationally minded politicians and social reformers. Mr. Gandhi, as his closest European friend, Mr. C. F. Andrews, has told us, is essentially Hindu in his attitude to life and scale of values, his religious thought, his eclecticism, and his inability to conceive of uniquely revealed truth. His references to Christian dogmas show complete misunderstanding and incapacity for systematic theology. His sturdy patriotism, racial pride, and justifiable contempt for the conduct of professed but renegade Christians, have led him to under-estimate at times the strong influence that Christian ethical teaching has undoubtedly exercised on him. The acknowledged influence of Tolstoi, Thoreau, and Ruskin may perhaps be set aside as only vaguely Christian. But his development and use of the principles of *Ahimsa*, as an active not merely passive element in life, is due not only to Tolstoi but in a larger measure to the Sermon on the Mount. The emotional effect of popular Christian hymns is stressed in Mr. Andrews's account of him. His vivid sense of sin, his faith in human nature when inspired by love, his recognition of the value of the human soul, his insistence in practice and precept on the efficacy of vicarious suffering, show strong evidence of Gospel meditation. He may well have got from Islam and Buddhism in combination the sense of human solidarity and brotherhood, his sympathy with the outcastes, his monotheism, his asceticism, and passion for the simple life. He must be believed when he says that he owes his personal devotion to God, his belief in divine grace bestowed on the devotee, to Marathi poetry, the copious writings of the *bhakti* school of thought, and particularly the *Bhagavad-gita*. But it may be doubted whether he would have subordinated Christian influence to the influence of Buddhism, or made it equivalent to that of Islam, if he had not regarded Christianity as more alien and western than the other two religions.

The general effect of his work has been to diminish rather than strengthen popular recognition of the social value of the Christian faith. Recognizing honestly the fine work which Christian missions have done for the outcastes, he does not associate it essentially with their faith; and he challenges their right to 'impose' that faith on those who have been born into another religion.

The work and attitude of Rabindranath Tagore has also tended to divert attention from distinctively Christian influence. He is a poet rather than a philosopher, a man of feeling rather than of



action (so far as political and economic activity is concerned). His influence is not comparable with that of Mr. Gandhi. But in his more systematic writings he displays himself to his students and followers as a rational humanitarian, synthesizing what is best in eastern and western thought, a citizen of the world, with a hatred of provincialism but a love for whatever is racy of the soil. He has not studied Christian thought carefully and conveys no idea of its distinctive contribution to thought or action.

In the Parsi community the effective labours of reformers such as Malabari, P. M. Mehta, H. A. Wadia, and others, have been accompanied by full and frank recognition of the value and influence of Christian ethics. There is little evidence of Christian influence on Zoroastrian thought and worship, but there are not the same obstacles to conversion as in the Islamic or caste Hindu world, and the social work of the influential Christian families of Parsi origin is fine testimony to their faith.

The most prominent figure in the Muslim reform movement, though by no means its only important figure, is its founder Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan, who nearly half a century after Ram Mohan Ray played much the same part in the initiation of Islamic progress as Ram Mohan played in the awaking of the Hindu world. The causes and tragic results of the Indian Mutiny brought home to him Islam's need for western education and the value of Christian ethics in western civilization. He founded Aligarh College for the propagation of western learning with a strong basis of Islamic teaching, consistent with the ideas and information imported from without. The Muslim educational conference that emerged from the Aligarh movement, like the Parsi reform movement, has been concerned with practical measures of social advancement rather than with religious implications or foundations. Though societies such as the Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam have been formed for the defence of the Muslim faith, Islam has had less to fear from the inroads of Christian teaching than from the breaches left in its walls by western education of a materialistic type.

Of the social reform movements that have worked on positivist lines, far the most important has been the Servants of India Society. This society was founded by G. K. Gokhale, the wise and statesmanlike leader of the moderate and liberal nationalists, in 1905. From the start it has been free from association with any form of religion. But it is hostile to no rational religion, and Gokhale in his mode of foundation appreciated the methods of the great proselytizing religions and the need for some motive power and organization equivalent to that supplied or sanctioned by supernatural religion. Its membership is open to all races and

religions, and is conditional on whole-hearted dedication to 'the religion of service'. There must be a sense of vocation. Vows of poverty are taken. Its work is mainly educational, in the broadest sense of the term; for its performance the members are most carefully trained; propaganda and publicity work are based on thorough research. The society's aims and methods are such as to attract whole-hearted adherents of the Christian or any rational faith. It would be impertinent for anyone who did not know the inner mind of the founder or his followers to discuss the part, if any, played by Christian ethics or the example of Christian societies in the formulation and execution of the scheme. That it has ethically and institutionally much in common with Christian missions is clear. Like those missions, it demands disinterested service in order that India may be freed by enlightenment. Regarding the kind of freedom, the purpose for which it is to be used, and the mode of enlightenment there is substantial difference of opinion, which need not, and does not, involve antagonism.

#### CHRISTIANITY AND THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

It is difficult in these days to discuss the Christian influence of the British government in India. The phrase suggests British patronage and claims to moral superiority which the enlightened Indian naturally resents; it stimulates racial feeling which finds ample support in the failure of Christian nations in the West to order their internal and international life in accordance with Christ's teaching. None the less it can, and must, be said that the social reform policy of the British government has been in general accord with the Christian-spirited proclamation of Queen Victoria in 1858, and that, though the realization of this policy has been sorely impeded by weakness as well as by obstacles which few, if any, governments have had elsewhere to face, the spirit of that proclamation has found some expression in action.

After the Indian Mutiny Queen Victoria assured her Indian subjects in these words: 'Firmly relying on the truth of Christianity and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of religion, we disclaim the right and desire to impose our convictions on any of our subjects.' This statement emphasizes the vital distinction between 'neutrality', a word the Queen excised from the draft with her own hand, and 'tolerance'. It proclaimed that a government which is compelled on grounds of equity and expedience to respect the religious doctrines and practices of all its subjects, so far as they are consistent with public order and humane principles, is none the less entitled to profess openly the faith to which it owes allegiance in action as well as thought. It set the seal on John Lawrence's blunt and wholesome declaration a few months before:



'Christian things done in a Christian way will never alienate the heathen.'

The inscription on the statue to Lord William Bentinck in Calcutta records that 'He infused into Oriental despotism the spirit of British freedom. His constant study was to elevate the moral and intellectual character of the nations committed to his charge.' It is shown elsewhere in this chapter that Bentinck, like other reforming administrators, could not have carried out, and would not have attempted, his reforms if enlightened non-Christian Indian support had not been behind him. But he owed much also to the instigation of the missionaries Duff and Carey, and was not chary of acknowledging his debt. Of him, as of Dalhousie, Curzon, and other progressive British rulers of India, it may be said that his active zeal for purity of administration, equality under the law, as much individual freedom as is compatible with public order and social decency, his energy and initiative, his belief in the possibility of progress, his hopeful determination, were essentially Christian. Such characteristics have been conspicuous also in non-Christian leaders of Indian reform. But their consistent, though by no means always effective, exhibition by a professedly Christian government has undoubtedly strengthened the belief in India that there is a peculiar virtue in Christian ethics which is favourable to social reform, though that virtue is not necessarily found in professed Christians.

There was a period, approximately from 1840 to 1865, when the Christian basis of good government was quite openly emphasized by prominent government officers. John Lawrence was not stating only his own views when he wrote in an official dispatch: 'We must endeavour solely to ascertain what is our Christian duty and follow that to the uttermost, undeterred by any consideration.' Men such as Henry Lawrence, Outram, Edwardes, Thomason, McLeod, and Thornton, were equally explicit in speech and writing—'bold independent yet Christian rulers, uncrowned kings of men by grace and election'. Sydney Smith's prophecy in 1808 that 'Methodism in the East will soon be the infallible road to promotion' during this period seemed likely to be fulfilled. Dalhousie in 1854, sweeping aside the arguments of those who feared that grants-in-aid to mission schools from public funds would offend Indian feeling, wrote: 'Even from the political point of view we err in ignoring so completely as we do the agency of ministers of our own true faith in extending education among the people.'

The claims of Christian missions to official protection, to financial support in their philanthropic and educational work, and to explicit recognition of their religious value by officials speaking in a personal not official capacity, were first acknowledged by the

government in this period (1840-65). During these years we read of a Governor of a province, a godson of Charles Simeon, the Cambridge Evangelical, who in opening a government college said that he looked forward hopefully to the Christianization of all India, and that for this purpose he was assisting in the foundation of a mission college. A Governor of Bombay took part in Sunday School work, at a time when the police were safeguarding the baptism of Parsi converts and when a memorial urging extension of mission work was being signed by the Commissioner of Sind, sixteen civilians, and twenty-three military officers.

In later years open support of the religious work of missions was far less common, but official references to their educational and philanthropic value became more and more frequent and explicit. The Governor of Bombay, introducing a mission deputation to the Prince of Wales in 1876, said: 'The missions have done more for India's welfare than all other agencies combined.' Lord Curzon told how the missions had 'stood between the dead and living' during the great famine.

Nor has there ever been any lack of officers ready to take or defend action clearly necessitated by Christian principles, even at the risk of offending Hindu or Islamic principles. Sir Henry Maine, defending legislation which allowed Indian Christian converts to remarry, said in 1866: 'We will not force any man to be a Christian; we will not even tempt him to become one. But if he chooses to become a Christian we will protect him in those rights of conscience which we have been the first to introduce into this country and will apply to him those principles of equal dealing between man and man of which we are in India the sole depositaries.' The High Court of Bombay, deciding in 1862 a libel action brought by a Vaishnavite temple against Christians who had attacked its vices, said: 'What is morally wrong cannot be legally right.'

There have never been wanting men in authority to testify in public to India's need of Christ's spirit and Christ's disciples.

It is, we believe, this Christian spirit, encouraged undoubtedly and effectively assisted by support from the enlightened section of the non-Christian world, that has placed on the statute book of India measures of social reform, too few in number, but actually or potentially far-reaching in influence. The suppression of suttee, the boldest and most dramatic act of Bentinck, was by no means the only reform measure of his time and the years that followed. The campaign against the Thugs had a humanitarian background and significance and was carried on in defiance of the religious sanction which they claimed. The reform of the Indian Penal Code, the abolition of legal slavery, the declaration of infanticide as murder, were integral parts of the same movement. The renewal of the



charter of the East India Company in 1833 was conditional on the removal of all caste and religious qualifications for government office. The principle was accepted in theory but its practical application was impeded by undue deference to claims of expediency. The Caste Disabilities Act of 1850 was an honest attempt to apply the principle to the laws of marriage and inheritance. Frequent but for the most part ineffective efforts were made by the government to secure the claim of the outcastes to educational facilities, the use of public wells, and a share in the necessities and amenities of life open to caste Hindus. The government also took both legislative and executive action for the reformation of the criminal tribes and for the humanitarian treatment of lepers, lunatics, and dumb animals.

It is the legislation affecting marriage and the age of consent that is particularly relevant to the purpose of this chapter. Such legislation, particularly offensive to orthodox Hindus, who interpret it as an attack on fundamental features of the social structure sanctioned, if not prescribed, by religion, could not have been carried through without the support of enlightened Hindus. Some of it, indeed, was initiated by or undertaken at the earnest and repeated request of such persons. But it may be doubted whether, even with this support, a government so apprehensive of religious feeling, and so conscientiously tolerant, would have faced the controversy that attended the passing of these measures and the outcry that followed their passing, if Christian feelings had not been roused by the injustice and cruelty of the practices which these laws were intended to prevent. The marriage of Hindu widows in accordance with the views of the Brahmo Samaj was legalized in 1856. The Christian Marriage Act, referred to above, followed in 1866. In 1872 came the Civil Marriage Act, though it was not extended to include those professing the Hindu faith till 1923. Infant marriage was a far more difficult problem. The age of consent was raised to 12 in 1891 after ten years of controversy, and again to 14 for males and 13 for females in 1925. But it was not till 1929, long after the inefficiency of legislation about the age of consent had been proved, and then only because of the initiative and insistence of Hindu members of the Legislative Assembly, that the Sarda Marriage Act, which imposed penalties on those who united in marriage males of under 18 or females of under 14, was passed.

The agitation caused by these measures, and it must be added, the proved impracticability of their strict enforcement, is thought by some to justify the extreme reluctance of the British government to legislate on any question affecting long-established or widely spread religious customs. Be that as it may, it is quite certain that this nervousness was the main cause for the very slow

and very cautious advance in social reform initiated or supported by the government. It preferred to depend far more on general enlightenment resulting from education and the work of Christian missions and of non-Christian reform movements than on legislation. This was no doubt wise. Premature legislation does more harm than good. But it was unfortunate that the same nervousness often led the government into lines of action, or was responsible for inaction, that encouraged in Indians the belief, despite Queen Victoria's proclamation and despite the action and pronouncements of individual officers referred to above, that the British government was completely uninfluenced by Christian principles and completely unmoved by the social evils associated with the non-Christian religions.

It was not until 1813, and then only after long and persistent agitation by the Evangelicals at home, that the right of missionaries to enter India was firmly established as a condition of the Company's charter. Though before this period Christian missions had been well established in South India, where men like Schwartz had proved their usefulness, the great Carey at the beginning of the century had been forbidden to land in Bengal, and had been driven, when he had managed to land, to work for a time on Danish soil. For many years after this right had been secured, after the social and philanthropic value of missions had been proved and their usefulness to government recognized, and after a Christian ecclesiastical establishment had been set up and endowed by the government, it was difficult for Indian Christian converts to get from the government the same consideration that Hindu and Muslim subjects received. Government service was too often closed to them. Conversions in the Indian army were deprecated and officers in whose battalions they occurred were liable to censure, even if they had played no part in the process.

It was not only this chilly attitude towards the religious work of missions that led Bishop Heber to declare in 1826 that 'we are in matters of religion the most lukewarm and cowardly people in the world'. The title of 'Dry Nurse to Vishnu' conferred by some critics on the government of those times had some justification. Many temples were managed, and their funds administered, by government officers. The government was often officially represented at temple ceremonies, and its officers were allowed and even encouraged to contribute to the temple treasuries. This official association with non-Christian worship and practice, condemned for the most part by enlightened India as grossly superstitious and fruitful in grave social evils, was given up only slowly and after long controversy.

Religious fears and scruples were not the sole or even the main



cause of the Indian Mutiny. But they were discernible in the state of mind that produced and prolonged it, and missionaries, together with their converts, suffered severely as a result. Such fears were caused, not by the resolutely Christian attitude of officials such as John Lawrence, but by the confusion wrought in unenlightened India by the contrast between such an attitude and the incidents and procedure described in the two preceding paragraphs. Why, for instance, did a government that declared in 1835 that all schools were open to the outcastes tolerate open disregard of this declaration? Why did a government that professed at times such respect for caste scruples subsidize mission schools that openly flouted such principles and establish railways in which caste and outcaste passengers were herded together? Suspicion grew that the government had designs for the overthrow of the Hindu and Muslim religions which fear compelled them to conceal by apparently friendly actions.

The Queen's proclamation after the Mutiny established firmly in Indian minds the conviction that no attack on any religion was contemplated or desired by the British rulers. It was thenceforward possible for the government to continue its encouragement and support of Christian educational and philanthropic work without arousing suspicion. The cessation of measures indicating official patronage of other religions removed the suspicion of double dealing. But it cannot be said that the Queen's affirmation of her government's reliance on the truth and value of the Christian faith has left an indelible impression on the mind of India, or that the non-Christian population has attributed such social reform measures as the government has undertaken to its acceptance of that faith. What has been noted is the official dependence in such measures on the initiative and support of enlightened Indians. The Englishman's instinctive reserve on religious subjects, a tendency even among the more orthodox to attach less importance than in earlier days to church attendance and Sunday observance, and to look sympathetically for what is good in other religions, have concealed the Christian origin of much that the British government has attempted and achieved in India.

#### THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

Direct Christian influence in India, through mission agency, had been established long before the beginning of the British period. We need not enter here into the obscurity of early Christian history in India. It is certain that there was an organized Church in South India, under the Babylonian Patriarchate, in the sixth century, and the Syrian Christians were a strong though not an actively proselytizing community in the fifteenth century. The

sixteenth century inaugurated a great and active campaign by the Roman Catholic agencies, which had been at work before that century, under Portuguese government auspices in West and South India. Xavier's mass conversion, backed by Portuguese official support, carried out with a surprising ignorance of local languages, and not apparently accompanied by systematic education of Christian communities, was followed by the establishment of the Jesuit Mission in 1590, when we hear of 500 missionaries at work among 251,000 converts. As a result of Robert de Nobili's work this number grew steadily during the seventeenth century. The mission made a careful study of the local languages and customs and developed an extremely tolerant attitude towards the caste system, which has characterized Roman Catholic mission work since that time. In North India Jesuits were prominent in the Mughal Court. Akbar showed a keen interest in Christian teaching and two Princes of the Court were baptized. Scholars have found strong traces of Christian thought in the Hindu religious writings of the period.

The Abbé Dubois, writing in 1815 after many years of mission work in South India, depicts its results in words that indicate that Christian missions, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, had made practically no progress in an apparently hopeless task. He had 'watered the soil with his tears'. They had 'fallen on a naked rock'. Two-thirds of the Jesuit converts had gone and the number had fallen to 33,000. Sixty years' work had produced practically no results among the higher castes. In the last thirty years there had been only 300 converts, of whom 200 were Pariahs. Christian charity made no appeal to a caste-ridden people or to 'the innate vileness of Hinduism'. 'Try to change a single institution and you will find an unconquerable people.' 'The day when Government presumes to interfere will be the last of its political existence.'

This was only a few years before Bentinck's régime and the abolition of suttee. Dubois had worked at the close of the darkest period in Indian history, in which the bigotry and centralized misrule of Aurangzeb had been followed by the bigotry and plundering raids of Maratha rulers in Central and North India, and by fighting between them and equally bigoted Muslim rulers in the south. Chaos had been intensified by the struggle between European powers for supremacy. But before the close of the period Protestant missionaries from Denmark and Germany, supported by S.P.C.K. funds from England, had established themselves firmly in South India. Unhindered by the British authorities, and with sympathetic encouragement from the Hindu rulers of Tanjore, they had developed from early in the eighteenth century,



largely owing to the fine and tactful work of Schwartz, the educational work and the careful shepherding of Christian communities which in the next century was to be so productive. By 1772 there were 22,000 Protestant converts in the Madras district. By 1835 there were 11,000 Protestant Christians in Travancore, and 30,000 in Trichinopoly and Tinnevely. In 261 Madras villages there were 12,000 Christians.

Though South India never lost the lead gained by its earlier start, the removal in 1813 of the restrictions placed in North India on mission activities, and even on mission entry, by official timidity, opened the whole of British India to Christian influence and began a period of intense activity inspired at the outset by great mission personalities such as Carey, Duff, and Wilson, and assisted by the vigorous outcrop at home of missionary societies, Free Church, Anglican, and Scottish Church, between 1790 and 1840. A frontal attack on Hinduism, all along the line but with special attention to the higher castes, was the order of the day. The means of attack were essentially education on western lines, Bible teaching, and street and village preaching. Several great and still powerful mission colleges owe their origin to this early period, Bishop's College near Calcutta, Duff's College (now the Church Assembly College) in Calcutta, Wilson College and the S.P.G. College at Trichinopoly (now amalgamated with Christian College, Madras) among others. Though Carey was a distinguished oriental scholar, with a marvellous gift for languages, and though men like Duff and Wilson were by no means ignorant of Indian religions and literature or averse from oriental studies, Indian salvation depended in their eyes essentially on what the West could give, and particularly the Bible: on a departure from all that Hinduism involved rather than on the adaptation and refinement of Hindu life, thought, and customs. They shared with Macaulay the view that a short period of western education (and the Bible) 'would not leave an idolater in Bengal'. By 1851 there were 91,000 Protestant Christians in India and about 200,000 Christians of all denominations.

A new period of mission activity began with the assurance of financial support from public funds and official encouragement for mission schools and colleges given in Sir Charles Wood's dispatch of 1854. Special stress was laid in that dispatch on extension of primary education for the masses. Obstacles that official timidity had placed in the way of women's education were removed. Missions were not only free, but were encouraged, to extend greatly their work in the villages among the outcastes, and among women in towns and villages, where their influence was most needed and was to be most deeply felt. Inquiries into the deep-

rooted causes of the Indian Mutiny showed the need for more and better education. The martyrdom it brought to many missionaries and converts provided a strong stimulus at home. Social and philanthropic work other than purely educational were developed during this period with increasing official encouragement. The pace of extension quickened and an increase of 22 per cent. in Indian Christian population was recorded between 1871 and 1878.

Up to 1880 there had been in Protestant mission work few signs of what has since become a conspicuous feature of such work, mass movements and the bringing within the Christian fold of communities rather than individuals. An impetus in this direction, and scope for village welfare and community work, were undoubtedly given by the great and disastrous famines in the latter part of the 1870-80 period. This new orientation of mission work, the widening of its social activities, and the emphasis on the corporate side of the Christian life, produced a far more vivid impression on Indian life and thought than the effect of the quickened rate of conversion which resulted from this new movement.

This emphasis on the corporate aspect of Christianity, and the conviction that the spiritual salvation of the individual is bound up with that of his community, and that the social and economic advancement of a community must proceed *pari passu* with its spiritual advance, grew steadily in intensity during the latter decades of our period. It has been fruitful because the enthusiasm it inspired has been guided and directed by careful scientific study of the problems involved in community welfare work. Valuable and pioneer contributions have been made by the study of village economics by mission surveys and experiments. The comparative value of higher education work among the literate castes, and of evangelistic and social work among the lower castes and particularly for the outcaste communities, has been the subject of heated discussion. The misgivings caused in some by the general refusal to give up or even seriously to diminish higher education work have been lessened by bringing higher education into line with village community work. The steps that are now being taken to interest Christian colleges in rural economics, and to equip them for research work and for extra-mural activities in this sphere, are likely not only to benefit both the college and the village, but also to increase the sympathetic interest in mission work shown by the enlightened section of the Indian peoples.

There is noticeable also a far more sympathetic and understanding attitude on the part of Christian missions to non-Christian religions and modes of life than was shown in early years, a greater readiness to search for what is good in them and to



use that element in the development of Indian Christian life. It has been easier for the latter day missionary to adopt such an attitude than it was for Duff or Wilson. The social evils of the non-Christian world are not so prominent and the sincerity and zeal of Hindu and Muslim reform societies have been impressive.

Latterly also the mission attitude to Indian nationalism and political aspirations was such as to lend no support to the idea, widely held at one time, that Christianity is an alien force, associated with alien rulers and therefore hostile to whatever might weaken India's political connexion with England. Though the mission world wisely abstained from taking part in political controversy, it abstained also from any speech or action that could be interpreted as critical of Indian aims, and it imposed no restriction on the many missionaries who gave sincere and open expression to their sympathy with them. Mission efforts to build up local churches, Indian in outlook, sentiment, mode of worship, and to entrust the largest possible measure of responsibility to Indian Christians in the pastoral and collegiate spheres, may have been belated; but they have been sufficiently effective to be counted among the arguments that can be urged against critics of Christianity as a denationalizing agency.

Gratitude for the educational, social, and philanthropic work of Christian missions, and the example and stimulus thereby afforded to non-Christian reformers, have undoubtedly exercised a strong influence on Indian life. This influence, to which frequent testimony has been given by non-Christian writers and speakers and by non-Christian census superintendents, has been strengthened by the discovery that a Christian can remain an Indian and, whether Indian or European, is not necessarily antagonistic to Indian independence.

After we have described the educational work of the missions and what has been done for the outcastes and women, we shall have to state and explain the limitations of the influence exercised by such work. But before doing so we must state our belief that the influence of Christian missions has been far greater than a mere study of the growth of the Christian population would suggest. That growth has in fact been conspicuous. The Indian Christian people in the fifty years since 1881 has increased by 238 per cent. In 1881 it formed only 0.7 per cent. of the total population. In 1931 the percentage was 1.8. In the last decade its rate of increase was three times as great as the rate of Hindu increase. In one decade of the period the Christian rate of increase was eight times as much as the rate for the total population. Between 1916 and 1926 the Protestant missions in the Telugu area received 43,000 outcastes into the Christian fold. Since 1930 they have been

receiving outcastes and caste folk at the rate of 25,000 to 30,000 yearly, and in this as in many areas the number would be far greater if there were more workers or if the workers were less conscientious.

But, if one were to judge solely by numbers, the impression made on India must seem insignificant. In 1931 Christians numbered a little less than 6 millions, a mere 2 per cent. of the total population. Numerically, though not otherwise, converts from the higher Hindu castes and from Islam hardly come into the picture. The Christian population is largely concentrated in a few areas. Nearly half of it is to be found in the Telugu areas, Tinnevely, and Travancore. There are areas with a population of five millions where no mission is at work. Evangelization work among Muslims and Sikhs is admittedly inadequate and comparatively unproductive. At the present rate of increase it would take another 160 years for India as a whole to become Christian. The present rate is indeed much faster than that of the Christian population in the first century of the Roman Empire. We refer to the figures not in order to minimize the effectiveness of Christian missions, but to contrast the extent and degree of their influence with the present numerical insignificance of the Christian community in India.

Approximately one quarter of the educational work in India, other than that of a purely professional or technical nature, is being done in mission schools and colleges. In South India and parts of North India the proportion is higher. Literacy figures establish the marked prominence of the Indian Christian community over all other communities except the Parsis, though the fact that only 28 per cent. of the Christian population is literate shows the task imposed on missions by the constant inpouring of illiterate outcastes. We shall discuss later the effect of Christian education on this community and the general effect produced by educational work for women and outcastes. We must deal first with the results of the education in Christian institutions of male non-Christian pupils, caste Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, and Parsis.

Conversion as a result of such education has been rare. It is mainly through these institutions, and solely through mission agency, including of course the Bible Society, that a knowledge of the Bible, and particularly of the Gospels, was extended through India in the early part of the period, though latterly the Bible came to be read and valued by many who had not been in mission schools or in direct contact with mission agents. The emotional effect of such reading and the universal reverence for the personality of Christ have already been noted. Frequent testimony has been given by Viceroys and Governors to the character and



ability shown by ex-students of mission institutions in posts of high responsibility. It could hardly be said, however, that in such posts or in professional life the non-Christian product of Christian education can be distinguished from those trained in efficient non-Christian institutions. Nor is it clear that the characteristics which have won such praise have been due essentially to Bible teaching or religious instruction. They are to be expected of those who have enjoyed a well-ordered school and college life and effective instruction. It is true that high caste students of mission colleges have shown in recent years a readiness for urban social service work, often involving contact with outcastes that Hindu orthodoxy would shun, as well as for participation in rural economic surveys and work. But the same enthusiasm is shown by youthful adherents of Hindu and Muslim reform movements who have never come under Christian influence.

The early advocates of Christian advance through Christian secondary schools and colleges did not foresee the development of a system of education in which Christian institutions would be merged, a system in which, reviewed as a whole by its beneficiaries, secular education has been the main and essential feature. What they had in mind was a system dominated by the Christian point of view, consisting mainly of Christian institutions supplemented by government schools at which, as was hoped and advocated at one time, Bible teaching would be given. They hoped also as a result of rapid conversion that the staffs and pupils of all Christian institutions would be predominantly Christian, and that the Christian influence on the non-Christian minority would be correspondingly great. The course of events has been far different. Neither staff nor students of mission secondary schools and colleges, regarded as a whole and with an admission of important exceptions, have been such as to make the atmosphere essentially and convincingly Christian. In the eyes of parents and pupils religious instruction and daily prayers have been an 'extra', outside the courses and school life recognized and inspected by the government and useless for the public examinations on which the students' careers depend. The provincial universities which assumed control of secondary school courses were essentially secular institutions without provision for religious study or examinations. The only two universities so far associated with religion have been Hindu and Muslim, not Christian.

Intimate personal contact between pupils and powerful Christian personalities on the staff would have intensified the Christian influence. Loyalty to persons rather than creeds and parties or institutions is a Hindu characteristic. In some mission colleges such loyal attachment has been possible. Very many

ex-students of Christian College, Madras, admitted gratefully the influence of their *Guru*, Dr. Miller, on their lives. But owing to the shortage of funds and staff many secondary schools and most primary schools have seen the missionary only during occasional visits of supervision.

For these reasons, and because so much zeal for social service and what is vaguely called the Christian spirit is shown by many who have never studied in Christian institutions, it is difficult—in fact the Lindsay Commission on Christian Colleges found it impossible a few years ago—to detect any distinctive contribution made to non-Christian Indian life and thought by Christian mission activities in secondary and higher education. Though there are noteworthy exceptions, of the normal Christian institution it may be said that the average non-Christian ex-student remembers it with gratitude just as the Indian world generally appreciates gratefully its educational debt to missions. But what is gratefully remembered is what is also remembered by ex-students of really effective institutions under non-Christian management. It must be added that determined efforts have been made in recent years to secure a more distinctly Christian contribution from these institutions.

We need not here dilate on what the missions have done by schools and other means for the women of India. It is well known and appreciated throughout India. For many years they alone possessed not only the zeal but also the instruments, women teachers and adequate supervision, for women's education, and they made admirable use of their opportunities, quickening the conscience of India and showing what was possible and what educated Indian women could achieve. The girls' schools and colleges were fewer in number than the boys' institutions; many of them were residential; Indian conditions necessitated close supervision and women teachers could be got only from the Christian community. The atmosphere generally was more Christian than in the boys' schools. Remembering this and the influence of the Indian wife and mother in the home, one is led to believe, what cannot be proved, that mission girls' schools have exercised on the Indian home and social structure an influence that for many years no other agency exercised or could have exercised. But it must also be noted that before the close of the period effective schools and colleges had been established by the government and by Hindu and Parsi societies, and that the competent and steadily increasing group of Indian women who are now making their influence felt in public and professional life includes some who have never studied in Christian institutions.

About the Christian work for the outcastes of India, close on



fifty millions in number, hundreds of excellent books have been written and there is material for many more. The impression of Christian charity and resolution created thereby on the mind of enlightened India could be illustrated by very many quotations from Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Parsi leaders. One must suffice here, from the census report (1901) of a Brahman superintendent of census operations in Travancore, where orthodox caste feeling is stronger perhaps than anywhere else in India. 'The heroism of raising the low from the slough of degradation and debasement was an element unknown to ancient India. The action of the missionary was an entirely original idea.' Nationalism was not strong in 1901. Many Indians to-day, still ready to applaud mission heroism and resolution, would deny the originality of the idea in India. They would, however, admit, if pressed, that the Buddhists who preached and acted on this idea could not retain a footing in India and that the many Hindu saints who appreciated the idea obtained for it no band of resolute adherents. The census superintendent proceeded: 'But for these missionaries the humble orders of Hindu society will for ever remain unraised.' Had he been writing to-day he would have been compelled to mention the equally heroic efforts of Mr. Gandhi and his followers, as also the work of the Servants of India Society, the Hindu Depressed Class Mission, and similar agencies. But he might have added that the results of Mr. Gandhi's campaign so far arouse a doubt as to whether any leader, without his magnetic personality, will have the courage or pertinacity to champion, with any hope of success, the cause of the outcastes on distinctively Hindu lines in the face of the bitter and violent opposition organized by orthodox Hinduism. And the whole-hearted efforts of those who have championed the outcastes on frankly secularist lines have been conspicuously ineffective. Seventy years after the Act for the removal of caste disabilities, only 609 schools in Madras Presidency out of 8,157 admitted the depressed classes. In India as a whole they were admitted into only 7 per cent. of the schools and colleges. It was only in schools established and maintained essentially for their benefit, or in schools predominantly Christian, that they got a fair chance. Their admission into other schools might at any time mean the boycotting of the school by the whole Hindu population.

Though Islam, like Christianity, preaches the brotherhood of man and carries it into practice in the treatment of its numerous converts from the lower castes, and though Muslim teachers have usefully been recruited for work in outcaste schools, the Muslim community has not in fact organized systematically or effectively any campaign for the uplift of the depressed classes. The schools opened for these classes by District Boards and other public

bodies have found the recruitment of an effective staff and supervising agency most difficult. What is more important and relevant to this chapter is the inability so far of any agency other than the missions to follow up and associate the education of the depressed classes with their settlement and development as organized communities.

It is the corporate aspect of Christian work, as we have said above, that has affected profoundly the life and thought of India. It is its work for the outcastes that has given non-Christian reformers an original and inspiring idea and practical guidance. The Christian settlement that has emerged has some of the features of the closely knit structure of the Hindu village of the past. But the Christian principle that we are members one of another takes the place of caste as the binding force. And the simple religious teaching that is given explains and enforces the measures taken for the community's economic advance instead of impeding such advance by the reactionary superstition associated with the village temple.

Reviewing his experience of many years' work in South India a well-known missionary, Mr. Sharrock, has stated that 'individual converts have not been the apostles of Christianity or brought the Hindu leaders an inch nearer Christianity'. The statement is to be accepted relatively as emphatic testimony to the superior influence of the Christian community, not absolutely as a reflection on the lives of individual members of the community. The list of outstanding and influential Christian men and women in the Indian world of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is far too long to be given here. In the spheres of social reform and education the work of Christians such as K. T. Paul, S. K. Rudra, Dr. and Mrs. Sathianadhan, and S. K. Datta has had a widely recognized national status and influence. But in the public eye their aims and methods have been identified with those of the many enlightened leaders who have not shared their religious faith. They have not been regarded essentially as the outcome of that faith.

This can also be said of Indian Christians who have been prominent figures in the political world. To what extent Christian principles can find expression in an atmosphere of compromise and strategy must remain an open question. But it is certainly true that Indian Christians individually and the community as a whole have given convincing proof that their religion involves no lack of sympathy with Indian aspirations or with the desire for political independence. 'The part played by the Indian Christians in the nationalist movement is not without importance, and it is during the past decade that their attitude has tended to change from that



of a separatist minority towards co-operation with the moderate nationalists, a change expressed by the formation of a Christian Nationalist Party in Bombay.' The separatist feeling referred to in this extract from the 1931 Census of India report was never strong among the Protestant denominations in India, and the reluctance of these denominations to claim separate Christian representation in the reformed legislatures was taken as further proof of their wish to avoid all suspicion of political aloofness.

But it is through the work of great Indian personalities in the rural mission field, and through the infectious enthusiasm shown by such men as Bishop Azariah in the shepherding of young Christian communities, that the essential and beneficent features of the Christian faith have been most effectively made known. It is in such a sphere that enlightened India finds that connexion between faith and works, so vital and clear to the Christian mind and so difficult for the Hindu mind to appreciate. The Indian Christian world has not so far produced a distinctively Indian interpretation of Christian expression which can be compared with the contribution made to theology by the Greek, Latin, French, or Anglican Churches. On Hindu and Muslim thought Indian Christianity has made but little impression. There have been, and are, Christian poets with a distinctively Indian appeal to the emotions. But their work is little known outside Christian circles. It is the Indian pastor and bishop, seeking the application of Christian principles to the problems of village life and finding expression of their faith in the field of rural economics, who have stirred the minds and hearts of the many caste Hindus in the Telugu country. Their influence will grow as they emerge in increasing numbers from Christian colleges where a scientific framework for Christian enthusiasm is being devised.

It seems unlikely that the spread of Christianity in the caste Hindu world will be effected through individual conversion. Though the penalties of conversion, still severe in orthodox Hindu families, are less harsh than they were, and though mission secondary schools and colleges are becoming more distinctively Christian in atmosphere and influence, Indian youth to-day is far more interested in schemes of social, economic, and political advancement that unite enlightened Indians than in questions of faith that breed division. It is no longer an indifference to religion, the first-fruits of a secularist education and a superficial acquaintance with science. What is now at work is a conviction, based unhappily on experience, that religion in India has usually meant communal strife and reactionary superstition. Even if Christian life in India proves that these are not the necessary results of supernatural religion, it has yet to convince India that the virtues which it

displays are dependent on its faith. Such a conviction is slowly ripening, but in communities as a whole rather than in the hearts of isolated individuals, and as the result of Christian work by and for the community rather than of work by and for the individual. A Hindu Census Superintendent in Mysore noted in 1911 'the enlightening influence of Christianity, patent in the higher standard of comfort of the converts and their sober discipline and busy lives'. A more recent observer notes the new generation of Christians growing up, very different from their parents. 'The grandchildren will be better still.' The old Adam is with difficulty cast out. Even in the more rigorous Protestant communities it is often difficult to insist on caste converts joining in worship with those who were recently outcastes. There have been cases of Christians resorting to civil marriage in order to avoid Christian restrictions on the age of marriage. But the fact that such reactionary conduct is condemned by the Christian community as a whole, whereas outside the Christian sphere it is the social reformer against whom the community sets its face, has not failed to impress the Indian world. In religion, as in all social activity, the Indian community is like the cloud as seen by Wordsworth: 'It moveth altogether if it move at all.'

But the way of the missionary is hard in India. Aspects of his work, such as have been described above, which powerfully impress one section of enlightened India tend to weaken his influence with another section. The man who devotes all his time and energy, so far as outsiders can see, to the social, economic, and educational uplift of a village community, the successful organizer, the man of affairs, seems to have nothing in common with the religious *Guru* or the Sannyasi whose life of meditation has such a profound influence on the individual Hindu follower. The active missionary is admired as a philanthropist. But to many he does not appear in the guise of a religious teacher. 'Indians', writes one of my correspondents, 'expect their religious teachers to be ascetics. It is the Sannyasi who commands most influence as a religious teacher. It has been said that it is as easy for a Hindu to renounce the world as for an Englishman to accept a peerage. The statement contains a kernel of truth.' The accusation of worldliness is seldom brought against the missionary to-day, and could certainly not be substantiated. But he does not and cannot, if he is to respond to urgent calls on Christian charity, appear 'other-worldly' as that term is applied by many Hindu seekers after truth.

There are other obstacles to the full and effective appreciation of the Christian faith by that section of the enlightened Hindu world which is still acutely alive to the value of religious experience and aware of the significance of its expression in creed or dogma.



Though this section is perhaps small numerically in comparison with the section that is indifferent or hostile to religion, it includes many whose influence is considerable.

The maxim *cuius regio eius religio* appeals to many thoughtful Hindus. To many it seems clear that enlightened mankind is ethically united, but that difference of religious opinion is natural and desirable. The practical virtues are common to humanity. A man's religion is not so much his own as the product of the soil and race from which he has sprung. Each racial religion must be periodically reformed and refined to bring it into line with universal ethical principles. The discarding of the religion of one's race and country is, in the strict sense of the term, 'impious'. The Christian missionaries who urge it are encouraging disloyalty to race and family and disregard of divine dispensation.

The catholicity of the Hindu mind, its love of tolerance which easily passes into bigoted dislike of dogma, the nebulous nature of Hindu doctrines, so different from the precise features of Hindu institutions, make Hindu thought singularly inaccessible to attack. Its capacity for absorbing what is at the time appropriate strengthens its resistance to any thought or doctrine that is inconvenient or too precise. The absence of any central seat of authority or established hierarchy ensures the whole structure of thought against collapse through the storming of its citadel. So greatly is this catholicity and tolerance venerated that there has been since the days of Keshab Chandra Sen a tendency to put forward Hinduism as a religion which can unite and satisfy the whole world. Many who retain the more characteristically Hindu idea of the equal value of all religions share the hope expressed by Sir S. Radhakrishnan that 'the Hindu ideal will reconcile the jarring disharmony of other faiths'. This belief owes much to the preaching of Swami Vivekananda, who proclaimed 'if there is a religion which can claim to be the universal religion of the whole world, it is ours and none else'. He maintained that Hinduism depends on principles not persons, and that only through principles could universality be brought about.

The Hindu mind separates theological dogma sharply from philosophy and puts it in a lower grade. A clear and persistent process of logical thought, daring but effective speculation, has produced in Hindu philosophy metaphysical principles for which, as for ethical principles, universal validity is claimed. But dogma such as that which finds expression in the Christian creed seems to the Hindu on a lower level, the result of emotion not thought, food for poetry not philosophy; an interpretation of experience appropriate to a particular time, place, or race, but valuable only to those who cannot rise to the highest planes of thought, and not

universally valid. Between Vedantic philosophy and the popular theology of the *Ramayana* there is no vital connexion.

What interests essentially the Hindu philosopher is the mind of man, capable only in its perfection of contact with supreme reality. It is not concerned with historical facts. The claim of the Christian creed to be an interpretation not only of human thought and feeling but also of facts recorded in history is overlooked or misunderstood. Recognizing the emotional and ethical value of the stories of Christ and Rama, the Hindu philosopher is not impressed by the fact that the one was a person known to history and the other the product of mythology. Both alike are outside the sphere of pure thought in which Hindu philosophy moves. The stories concerning both can be equally useful in the planes of feeling and action. It is true that the *bhakti* philosophy brings emotion, devotion to a personality, within the realm of thought. But devotion to an ideal personified in a mythical hero seems to have the same value as devotion to a historical person.

That God should reveal His nature and purpose to His creatures is by no means repugnant to Hindu thought. That Hindu saints have been the channel of such revelation is believed by many. What is repugnant is the idea that any one mode or channel of revelation has a unique value. The truth—or such portion of it as is needed and appropriate at the time—may be revealed by incarnation. But it is the idea not the fact of incarnation that has significance. 'Whenever I am needed in a world of sin I am born again and again.' What is important is the persistence of this idea, finding expression in a series of myths with an emotional appeal to the unlearned. To minds preoccupied with ideas there seems to be no need for a human person to establish by his life and influence a conviction that the idea is true as well as useful.

It is these characteristics of Hindu thought that impede the Hindu study of Christian dogma and lead one to suppose that the way to Christian faith, if it is followed by enlightened Hindus, will be through the manifestation of that faith in the Christian community rather than through its exposition in speech or writing. In the writings of esteemed Hindu philosophers to-day, such as Sir S. Radhakrishnan, one may find many traces of sympathetic reading of Christian philosophy and frequent use of Christian metaphor. One looks in vain for an understanding of the essential Christian dogmas.

The effect of direct Christian influence on the educated Muslim is, we believe, summarized accurately in the following words of an outstanding figure of the Islamic world, well known for his political and administrative ability founded on a liberal education. They were sent to the writer of this chapter.



'Christianity has come to us so much mingled with industrialism, humanitarianism, and love of liberty; and it has acted upon different groups of the Indian peoples in such diverse ways, that to sum up all these aspects in a single chapter, or even in a book, can do nothing but partial justice to the subject. The safest thing is to speak for oneself only and to that extent I have no hesitation in expressing the deep obligation I owe to Christianity. And this I owe mostly to two factors. First, I was in contact almost throughout my school and college career with the Catholic priests in —, whose devotion to knowledge and pursuit of high ideals could not but inspire me with deep and abiding respect for Christianity. The other way in which Christianity has, I believe, influenced me is through the opportunity which close contact with it and its literature gives to peoples of other religions for reviewing their own faiths from a different angle. It is this, I believe, which imparts a wider and more understanding attitude towards religion and life in general.'

'By their fruits ye shall know them.' It is perhaps this text, misunderstood in India as often in England, that summarizes non-Christian India's attitude towards Christianity throughout our period. The words, taken in their context, mean that the truth of a religion is to be gauged by the character of its ethical teaching and the number of its adherents who live up to it. But this is how the enlightened Hindu interprets it and this is what he seems to hold. In religion, as distinct from philosophy, he is a confirmed pragmatist. His insistence on it is perhaps a useful tonic for the Christian world. It is possible that all India would be Christian to-day if all, or even the majority, of the professed Christians who came to India had led lives in accordance with their Master's precepts. It is certain that during the last fifty years the revealed state of the western world has led many Indians, as one writer has put it, to reject Christianity in the cause of Christ.

India has throughout our period been looking passionately for the Way and the Life. It has not been looking so passionately for the Truth, because the need has not seemed so urgent. Hinduism, says Sir S. Radhakrishnan, unites men in a common quest rather than a common truth.<sup>1</sup> The Christian faith is that those who follow the founder of that faith in the quest will find in him not only the Way and the Life but the Truth. If this be so, it is the corporate life of the Christian community in India that is most likely not only to establish the identity of the Way and the Truth, but also to prove that the Truth is the same for all and a bond that unites the human race.

<sup>1</sup> *The Hindu View of Life* (1927), p. 58.

## CHAPTER IX

### HINDUISM AND THE WEST

INDIA is the home of a civilization which in its origins is probably as ancient as either the Egyptian or the Sumerian, but unlike them is yet functioning as a vital factor in the lives of nearly a fifth of the entire population of the world. It has produced and still produces saints and sages, poets and philosophers, artists and statesmen. It has thrown out movements of world significance such as Buddhism, reformist sects like Jainism and Sikhism. It has extended its influence to every part of India and has effected the cultural unity of the country, which would otherwise be a mere geographical expression, a miscellany of a number of different regions inhabited by different races, speaking different languages. Though now and again observers maintain that India is a continent, that there are Bengalis, Gujaratis, Marathas, Rajputs, Punjabis, or Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, it is admitted that those who live in India have a sufficient consciousness of unity and of a common cultural background to realize that they are Indians with a definite outlook on life and are different from other peoples. Even such social institutions as the system of caste, joint-family, and village communities exert an enormous influence on those who do not belong to the Hindu fold. This is not unnatural, for although a few of the Muslim aristocracy can trace their descent from victorious conquerors of earlier days, 90 per cent. of the Indian Muslims are Hindus by race, and even the few who came from outside made India their home.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the British had established their dominion over the country, and imposed peace and order on it, they turned to what the Marquess of Hastings, in a letter written in 1818 to the Court of Directors, called 'the amelioration of man'. 'The great work achieved by your arms ought to be followed by a peace, of which you will be solicitous to avail yourselves as the fortunate opportunity for disseminating instruction and morals among immense communities lamentably deficient in the conception of social principles and duties. A vast field for the amelioration of man lies before us.' The well-intentioned efforts of the East India Company were based on ignorance of, and generally contempt for, the cultural background of India, though there were exceptional individuals who began to study and reveal to the West some of the treasures of Hindu and Muslim literature and learning. With the growth of the British power the old order weakened and the confidence of Indians in their own



culture diminished. Many were dazzled by the civilization of the West, which seemed to be better adapted for the acquisition of temporal power. A few were so enchanted by it that they took to western culture with the enthusiasm of neophytes and endeavoured to westernize themselves completely; some became Christians. Proclaiming the futility and worthlessness of India's social and religious institutions, they wished to rebuild the structure of national life on new foundations. Not so the great majority. In the Mughal period those who wished to take service under the Mughals acquired a knowledge of Persian, but such an acquisition did not make them less Indian or more attached to the religion of their rulers. So now the classes educated in English did not, as a rule, give up their traditional ways of life and habits of mind, but used western learning for improving their own culture and adapting it to the new impulses created by contact with the West.

The spread of western education and ideals stimulated movements within Hinduism designed to preserve its essential principles and at the same time to remove excrescences which were opposed not only to the spirit of Hinduism but also to the ideals spread by western culture. What is the spirit of Hinduism? What are its essential principles? The spirit of science is not dogmatic certainty but the disinterested pursuit of truth, and Hinduism is infused by the same spirit. As I have remarked in another work,<sup>1</sup> fixed intellectual beliefs mark off one religion from another, but Hinduism sets itself no such limits. It is comprehensive and synthetic, seeking unity not in a common creed but in a common quest for truth. Hinduism is more a way of life than a form of thought. It insists not on religious conformity but on a spiritual and ethical outlook in life. It is a fellowship of all who accept the law of right and earnestly seek for the truth.

Hinduism has its basis in the philosophy of the Vedanta. Vedanta means the end or ultimate significance of the Vedas, and different forms of it interpret that significance in different ways, which need not be regarded as mutually contradictory. There are the theistic interpretations of the *Viśiṣṭadvaita* and *Dvaita*, which are in principle not different from analogous developments in Christian thought, and there is the *Advaita* interpretation of uncompromising non-dualism, which also has parallels in the West. The Vedanta has a practical purpose, to regenerate the soul, to make it see the truth. We can know the truth only to the extent we have lived it. No one is a philosopher whose teaching is not reflected in his life. When the Upanishad writer claims that spiritual freedom is attained through gnosis (*jñāna*), he means not mere intellect but a vital function of the spirit. Philosophy as the

<sup>1</sup> *The Hindu Way of Life* (1927).

pursuit of wisdom is a guide to right thinking and right living. According to the great tradition, philosophy is a study of the self. It is the science of the self, *atma-vidya*. When the Upanishad tells us 'that thou art' (*tat tvam asi*) or 'I am the Real' (*aham brahmasmi*), it indicates that truth is not an objective state but a spiritual condition. The self is not unknown (*avedya*), nor is it known as an object (*vedya*); it is self-known (*svavedya*). *Jnana* is not conceptual reasoning or metaphysical perspicacity but is illumined being, direct and immediate consciousness of reality.

How can we obtain this state of illumination, of radiant certainty, of power and vitality? We have to discipline the mind, and prevent psychological prejudices and obstacles from interfering with the direct perception of the truth. We must purify the vision from the contamination of our desires, see all things as they are, parts of objective existence. All that we are must be submitted objectively to the pure vision of the spirit. The renunciation must be entire and the spirit must become pure. The discipline is austere. The Upanishad says: 'The self is realized by truth, by austerity, by proper knowledge, by uninterrupted self-control. Inside the body is the self full of light and pure, and it is perceived by persons of self-control whose imperfections are destroyed.' Of the vision of pure being, only symbolic expression is possible. No reasoned statement is adequate to express its mystery. To define the real is to turn it into an object and so to degrade it. Its inwardness of spirit resists division in time or space. We cannot even say that it is one; we say that it is non-dual (*advaita*).

The moment that we make the real object into an object of knowledge, it becomes a part of the objective world. It is the concrete, revealed God waking in the world of nature and history, *Isvara*. The whole objective universe, because it is objective, is not the pure subject; yet it is its objectification. This objectification is a process in which the whole universe, from matter to God, shares. It will go on until the purpose of the spirit in this manifestation is perfectly fulfilled. The conceptions of Brahman and *Isvara*, Absolute and God, the *Nirguna* Brahman and *Saguna* Brahman of Sankara, are not irreconcilable. While Sankara emphasizes the absolute character of the Supreme, he recognizes the divine sovereignty of the world. Tradition has it that he is the author of many hymns of intense devotion to God. The real can be conceived in two ways, from within and from without. Seen from within, the divine is living at rest within itself. The division of subject and object is not relevant to divine aseity or absoluteness. The real can be conceived as an object presiding over a world. Its inner life is reflected in outward action. The Absolute becomes God who overflows into the world, which he penetrates, controls,



and sustains. In the world we have the descent of the divine into the limitations of creaturehood, God become flesh, subject transformed into object, working in nature and history.<sup>1</sup> The two conceptions which have met in European thought, the classical and the Biblical views, the mystical and the prophetic, are combined in the Hindu conception. It emphasizes the *Nirguna* aspect of the real as the absolute which we can gain by way of gnosis, by knowing the self, breaking the spell, and enduring the bondage, and the *Saguna* or the personal expression of reality which we realize by the way of Eros, when we pray to God for grace to help us. Even self-knowledge in this world is a matter of divine gift. The Supreme Self is not realized by discourse, nor by intellectual power, nor by much reading. He is realized by one whom he himself elects; to such a one he reveals himself. God becomes the perfect personality who can help us in our weakness and imperfection. The personal conception of the divine comes to us from the earliest times. The *Yajur Veda* has the following prayer:

'Lord Thou art Splendour, endow me with splendour;  
 Thou art Force, give me force;  
 Thou art Strength, make me strong;  
 Thou art Energy, make me energetic;  
 Thou art Indignation (against evil),  
 infuse such indignation in me;  
 Thou art Forbearance, make me forbearing.'

The *Svetasvatara* gives a glowing account of the living personal God. 'None can equal him or surpass him. His great power is spoken of as of various forms. His knowledge, power, and activity are all perfectly natural.' 'He is the one God hidden in all things, all pervading, the indwelling self of all objects, the controller of Karma, abiding in all things, the witness, the knower, the alone, devoid of qualities.'

While the thinking few understand the philosophical subtleties of Sankara's *advaita*, the popular religion of India is theism. It is the *Saguna* aspect that is emphasized in some of the later Upanishads, like the *Svetasvatara* and the *Bhagavad-gita*. They proclaim a God of grace to whom men pray, who is real and active for the good of men. They present a God of love and demand a life of severe discipline and selfless activity. With the spirit of com-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Vogel: 'God is either for himself, absolutely, apart from all creatures, in the mystery of his unity, or else in relation to his creatures. God, absolute, alone, for himself apart from all creatures, is and remains impersonal, timeless, placeless, inactive, willless, dispassionate, nor is he Father or Son or Holy Ghost but he is in eternity, beyond time, in every place poised in the dwelling of himself, working nothing, willing nothing, desiring nothing; but in respect of his creature, i.e., with and through the creature, he is personal, active, and willing, desiring and suffering.'

prehension characteristic of Hinduism, this personal God is identified with Vishnu or Siva or Sakti or other manifestations. The philosophical thinkers of the different schools of religion interpret the canonical scriptures, the Upanishads, the *Brahma Sutras* and the *Bhagavad-gita*, in justification of their particular sectarian views. Ramanuja, the great Vaishnava theologian, in his commentary on the *Brahma Sutras*, gives a theistic interpretation, identifying the supreme reality with Vishnu, who is a real God of grace and not an attributeless silence. He writes:

'We know from scripture that there is a supreme person whose nature is absolute bliss and goodness, who is fundamentally antagonistic to all evil; who is the cause of the origination, sustentation and dissolution of the world; who differs in nature from all other beings, who is all-knowing, who by his mere thought and will accomplishes all his purposes, who is an ocean of kindness, as it were, for all who depend on him; whose name is the highest Brahman.'<sup>1</sup>

In the *Bhagavad-gita*, Krishna is portrayed as an active, gracious God who attends to the needs of men and demands from them the response of love. 'With mind on me, devoutly worship me; to me do sacrifice, to me do reverence; to me shalt thou come; true is my promise to thee; thou art dear to me.' 'Abandoning every duty, come to me alone for refuge; I will release thee from all sins; sorrow not.'<sup>2</sup> Later Vaishnava devotees make out that the individual is a sinner and God is holiness.

'I am a mass of sin;  
Thou art all purity;  
Yet thou must take me as I am  
And bear my load for me.'<sup>3</sup>

'*Advait* contents me not; but dear to me  
The service of thy feet.'<sup>4</sup>

Tulsi Das in his Hindi *Ramayana* says: 'As a lover loves his mistress, as a miser loves his money, so for ever and ever may Rama be beloved by me.'<sup>5</sup> For him Rama is a god of mercy who sympathizes with his people's needs. Tukaram speaks of his soul's need, his sense of sin, his desire for Krishna's grace. There is in him an intense desire to bring to others the knowledge of God's love on which he bases all his hope.

'Can my heart unmoved be  
When before my eyes I see  
Drowning men?'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ramanuja on *Brahma Sutra*, iv, 4, 32.

<sup>2</sup> xviii, 65-6.

<sup>3</sup> Nicol Maenicol, *Prasna of Maratha Saints*, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>5</sup> vil Dona, 127.

<sup>6</sup> 7. iii.



The great Saivite poem *Tiruvasagam* by Manikkavasagar speaks to us of the conversion of the author in whom the thought of Siva's grace inspired penitence, gratitude, and intense devotion. We frequently come across passionate expressions of gratitude to Siva's grace, to which he owed his great conversion.

The Hindu accepts all genuine formulations of the supreme adventure, all names given to the supreme reality. He believes that every creed that helps to ennoble and sanctify human living is justified. Our doctrinal expressions are partial visions of supreme reality and our codes of conduct are imperfect attempts to organize human life in accordance with the supreme end. Whatever dogma we may start from, whatever approach we may adopt, if we persist in our endeavour, we shall reach the truth behind the dogmas. Nobody possesses the truth, we are all seeking for it. The Hindu has no sympathy with nationalism in religion. He stands for an appreciation of other religions and thus serves the reconciliation of mankind. Even as the brotherhood of mankind is quite consistent with the retention of separate national loyalties so long as the latter are held subordinate to the common weal of mankind, so Hinduism believes that the ultimate achievement of unity in religion can be attained by preserving and purifying the different historical faiths. To-day Hinduism is confronted by the missionary religions of Islam and Christianity, which claim that their revelations contain the full and only self-disclosure of God. The universality they aim at is capable of achievement only if the other religions lose their individuality. Hinduism, however, by virtue of its historical circumstances, does not lay claim to any exclusive possession of truth and is aware that societies not inferior to its own in intelligence and virtue adopt views of the unseen world which are apparently different from its own.

The main emphasis of Hindu religion is the potentiality of the divine in man. There is no unbridgeable gulf between God and man and between man and man. The vision supreme establishes universal kinship, the oneness of man in God. While the mystical side emphasizes the unity of man and God, the personal side points out how man is so different from God that he has to change himself before he can be admitted into the presence of the divine. This distinction refers to the double movement in spiritual life. We must crucify the flesh—whatever is unreal and sinful in us. When we are engaged in this task, our nature seems to be corrupt and unclean, demanding drastic treatment. There is an abyss separating man from God. God is everything, man and the world are nothing. We are pitiful, worthless creatures, dark images of sin. God is the only free agent. This abasement of the world and man finds expression in the form of *bhakti* religion. At the same

time all this discontent would not be possible, if the human were not impelled by the divine. When we are filled with peace, joy, and illumination, we feel that 'I am the real'. It is difficult to describe adequately by concepts this intensely dynamic and inexpressible experience. Spiritual life is a struggle demanding heroism and sacrifice, involving an experience of contradiction, schism, and disruption ending in the victory of reality. If we do not have a clear understanding of the true inwardness of the search for God, the personal side of religious life with its needs and distresses, we shall be troubled by the seeming contradictions of Hindu religion. Spiritual life belongs to a plane different from one in which cold theology and analytical logic operate. If we exaggerate certain moods of spiritual life, we shall be led to a theory of immanent monism or even atheism which denies divine reality by affirming the divinity of nature. In other moods we may be led to an inflexible dualism or even acosmism by denying reality to world and man. The contradictory criticisms urged against Hindu religion that it is pantheism and illusionism point to an imperfect understanding of the riches of spiritual life. Hinduism is a comprehensive religion which has sounded the depths of man's search for reality and has brought its results together in a vast synthesis which is able to help persons in different stages of evolution.

The reactions of Hinduism to western influences have varied from blind imitation of the West to an unthinking hostility and opposition to it, with, at present, a more balanced attitude. Hinduism, however, has the tenacity characteristic of a living organism, and the movements started by the more thoughtful reformers, the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, and the Ramakrishna Mission, are expressions of its spirit. All reaffirm the adequacy of the Hindu religion in its essence but demand a re-ordering of society to suit modern needs. They go back to the Vedic Rishis, who are the main creators and preservers of spiritual values, and they embody those values. The first of our moderns was Ram Mohan Ray (1772-1833), who attempted to preserve continuity with the past and yet assimilate the new social values derived from the West. He made it clear that he had complete sympathy with the imperishable treasures of the past, the central truths of Hinduism, but fought against popular idolatry and other pernicious customs. He himself said: 'The ground which I took in all my controversies was not that of opposition to Brahmanism but to the perversion of it; and I endeavoured to show that the idolatry of the Brahmans was contrary to the practice of their ancestors and the principles of the ancient books and authorities which they profess to revere and obey.' Hinduism in its popular forms in Bengal had fallen from its high estate. It had come to be



associated with a mass of superstition. Its real concepts, its inmost truths had been forgotten or were known to comparatively few. Ram Mohan Ray, turning to the Upanishads, found in them a new revelation of one infinite, supremely just, divine Being; and Hinduism as he saw it in the daily life around him was a perversion of their teaching. Actually the truths which he found in the Upanishads were familiar to those who had studied the latter, particularly perhaps in South India, and it was pointed out at the time by a learned Brahman that Ram Mohan Ray had no right to be thought the discoverer of a doctrine which was well known to all students of Sanskrit, especially of the Vedas.<sup>1</sup> But Ram Mohan Ray made them more widely known, and may be said to have popularized them by translating the Upanishads from Sanskrit into Bengali.

In 1828 he founded the Brahma Sabha and on 20 August 1828 a *mandir* (temple) was opened in Calcutta dedicated to 'the cult of the only eternal Brahman, who has no equal and is the originator and preserver of the world'. There was no image in the temple, and it was laid down that 'no religion should be reviled or slightly or contemptuously spoken of or alluded to'. He rejected the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, but, like a true Hindu, admired the ethical teachings of Jesus. In the preface to his *Precepts of Jesus* (1820) he urged that 'this simple code of religion and of morality is so admirably calculated to elevate man's ideas to high and liberal notions of the one God' and 'is so well fitted to regulate the conduct of the human race in the discharge of their various gifts to God, to themselves and to society, that I cannot but hope for the best effects from its promulgation in its present form'. Hindu religion, for him, did not demand asceticism or retirement to the forest for the purpose of achieving a religious life, but home and human society were a suitable environment for the religious individual.

Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905), the father of the poet Rabindranath Tagore, carried on the work of the purification of Hinduism, and in 1845 with the support of liberal friends founded a religious society, the Brahma (Anglice, Brahmo) Samaj, or the society of believers in Brahman. He laid down four articles of faith: (1) In the beginning was nothing. The One Supreme Being alone existed. He created the Universe. (2) He alone is the God of Truth, Infinite Wisdom, Goodness, and Power, eternal, omnipresent, the One without second. (3) Our salvation depends on belief in Him and in His worship in this world and the next. (4) Belief consists in loving Him and doing His will. Debendranath says 'these living truths came down into my heart from Him who is the Life and the Light and the Truth'. He was a

<sup>1</sup> See Max Müller, *Biographical Essays* (1884), pp. 19-20.

cautious reformer and his younger collaborators were impatient for rapid changes.

The greatest of these, Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-84), joined the movement in 1857 and was greatly influenced by Christianity, believing in its spirit but not in the person of its founder.

'In the purely human Christ', he wrote in 1874, 'we can hardly feel any interest; but the divine elements of his character come home to every man's bosom and business, and are of the highest importance to our redemption as involving the eternal and universal principles of ethics. By Christ we mean not the person bearing that name, not his form and flesh, but the spirit he embodied—the spirit of faith, love, righteousness, and sacrifice of which he was unquestionably a noble impersonation.'

Religion, he insisted, must bear fruit in action, and he strove to rouse the social consciousness of the community, himself establishing many institutions in connexion with social welfare. The Brahmo Samaj, however, became split by schisms. It divided in 1866 into a small conservative section, the Adi Brahma Samaj (i.e. the original Brahmo Samaj), and the Navavidhan, which was further removed from the central principles of Hindu teaching; and after Keshab had his fourteen-year-old daughter married to an Indian prince, in contravention of the Samaj's condemnation of child marriages, the adherents of reform started the Sadharan Samaj, which had definitely anti-Christian tendencies. To-day much of what the Brahmo Samaj struggled and strove for is accepted by the Hindu community in general and its influence on Hindu life is more unconscious than conscious.

In Ramakrishna and Vivekananda Hinduism became radically transformed into its original pattern. Its tolerance and message of social service received new emphasis. Ramakrishna (1833-86) a poor Brahman, was in the direct line of descent from Chandidas and Chaitanya and was full of desire for union with God, a desire which can be satisfied either by yogic *sadhana* and exercises or by ardent worship of the divine in human form. A devotee of the goddess Kali, the sacred mother, he declared that the manifestations of the divine mother were infinite, and that all religions contain the universal elements which, if fulfilled, lead to salvation. For him, religion was an experience of the Supreme. When his famous disciple Vivekananda asked him 'Have you seen God?', he replied 'Yes, my son, I have seen God. I do see him, just as I see you before me. Only I see God in a much more intense sense and I can show him to you.'<sup>1</sup> He again had a profound social consciousness and felt that man cannot find himself in God unless he removes the barriers which separate him from his fellow men.

<sup>1</sup> Vivekananda, *My Master*.



'Jiva is Siva' (all living beings are God). Who then dare talk of showing mercy to them? Not mercy, but service, service for man, must be regarded as God.' After his death in 1886 his disciples organized themselves as a religious community and set themselves the task of making his life and teaching known in India and abroad. Vivekananda (1862-1902) was an ardent spirit and preached to the world comprehension, harmony, and peace. He advocated the practical Vedanta of service to humanity and attacked the tendency to defend every institution simply because it was connected with religion. The Ramakrishna Mission, which believes in the religion of 'Mysticism and Charity', is one of the potent means for the regeneration of Hinduism to-day and is doing very useful social work also.

To check the progress of proselytizing religions, Dayanand Saraswati (1824-83) drew support from national sentiment and proclaimed Hindu theism based on the Vedas. His ardent nature revolted against the superstition and ignorance, degrading prejudices, and gross idolatry which he saw around him. With heroic energy he set himself the task of ridding Hinduism of its abuses. To a people disposed to be fatalistic he affirmed the freedom of the soul. 'An energetic and active life is preferable to the acceptance of the decrees of destiny. Destiny is the outcome of deeds. Deeds are the creators of destiny. Virtuous activity is superior to passive resignation.' 'The soul is a free agent, free to act as it pleases. But it depends on the grace of God for the enjoyment of the fruit of its action.'<sup>1</sup> Even if his theology was narrow, his social work was courageous. The Arya Samaj which he founded in 1875 affirmed in principle equal justice for all men and all nations, together with equality of the sexes. It repudiated a hereditary caste system and the outrage of untouchability. 'The Aryas are not a caste. "The Aryans are all men of superior principles, and the Dasyus are they who lead a life of wickedness and sin." He struggled for the improvement of the condition of women and claimed for them equal rights with men in marriage. He admitted the remarriage of widows. The influence of the Arya Samaj in western and northern India, particularly the Punjab, Delhi, and Agra, has been immense.

The Theosophical Society, founded in 1875 by Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, encouraged the Hindus at a moment when their religion was being discredited. When Mrs. Besant appeared on the Indian scene, the secular education of the universities was producing a widespread contempt for Indian religions and customs, casting out ancient ideas and failing to put anything in their place. The theosophical movement appealed to the Indian intellectuals by the sympathy it engendered for Indian ideas in the

<sup>1</sup> *Satyantapraakash*.

world outside. It stimulated a study of the Hindu classics, especially the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad-gita*. Its contribution to the national, social, and religious awakening of India is not inconsiderable, but though its social work is still appreciated, its religious eclecticism did not succeed in obtaining dominion over spiritual India.

Gandhi's leadership to-day is responsible for great forward steps in Hinduism. His whole method springs out of the traditional ideas of Hinduism, and he emphasizes the ethical and social aspects of it. He roused the conscience of the Hindu community to the age-old wrongs done to those treated as untouchables. He proclaims that the 'untouchables', whom he calls Harijans (men of God), are meant to share in the common heritage of Hinduism. 'I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should wish to be born an "untouchable", so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings and the affronts levelled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from that miserable condition.' He points out that active service for others is a sign of holiness. Religion is the rule of God in human life. There is no tendency in him to acquiesce in life's evils as inevitable. His life is a challenge to facile compromises. To many Christians Gandhi's life seems to be the closest approximation to the ideal of a Christian life as formulated in the Gospels, and yet he refuses to call himself a Christian, for the Hindu in him revolts against dogmatic Christianity. While he regulates the whole of his life by the law of love, he interprets Christian dogma in Hindu terms. At a Christian missionary conference in Calcutta, ten years ago, he was told that Christianity is experience of the living Christ, and anyone who has not that experience is not a Christian, however faithfully he may follow the ethical teaching of Jesus. Gandhi's answer to this challenge is what one would expect from a Hindu.

'I do not know what you mean by the living Christ. If you mean the historic Jesus, then I do not feel his presence. But if you mean a spirit guiding me, a presence nearer to me than hands and feet, than the very breath in me, then I do feel such a presence. If it were not for the sense of that presence, the waters of the Ganges would long ere this have been my destination. Call it Christ or Krishna, that does not matter to me.'

We have here a witness to a living experience of spiritual power, bursting forth in a life of heroic activity and an utter indifference to the names we give to the nameless spirit. We find the emphasis on a positive experience of God, a life of service and sacrifice, and a definite denial of all exclusive claims and labels.

<sup>1</sup> *Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas*, ed. C. F. Andrews, p. 165.



These are the fundamental features of the Hindu faith, operative in its many phases.

It is not possible in the available space to speak of various other movements such as the Deva Samaj and the Radhaswami Satsang or retreats centring round great spiritual leaders like Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai and Sri Arambinda Ghose. Suffice it to say that they are all interested in making religion real, rational, and relevant to the social needs of the people.

Hinduism has had its periods of growth and decline, and we are to-day in the midst of a Hindu renaissance. The word 'renaissance' is not used in the sense of a mere revival of antiquity. Revivalism is the enemy of life. In a renaissance the eternal principles are being reborn to be applied to a new life in new ways. There is the growth of a new spirit like the one which shattered the medieval order and eventually issued in the new world of the seventeenth century. The Hindu renaissance is a protest against theological dogmatism, priestly power, and mere words or scholasticism. It is the voice of reality in religion and truth in life. Hinduism has had such vitalizing movements in the pre-Christian era, in the period of the Upanishads, the age of the Buddha, Mahavira, and the author of the *Gita*, and in the post-Christian era, the period of great teachers, Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, and in the development of the *bhakti* cult in the Muslim period. The renaissance that is active to-day is a repetition of processes familiar to the growth of Hinduism and is impelled by contact with western culture brought about by the advent of the British in India.

There is a new pride in India's spiritual achievement and a new hope for its renewal. The basic principles of the Hindu faith have sufficient breadth and resilience to serve as the background of a universal religion of humanity that is yet to arise, a religion which refuses to build on any dogmatic creed but has room for all the truths that old times have won, as well as those which will rise from the 'unspent deep things of God', a religion which welcomes into its fold all who are pure in heart and sincere in worship, and thus fosters a life of the spirit which will be too vast and rich to be reduced to any one form. This tolerant attitude enables Hinduism to withstand the impact of the modern critical and scientific spirit better than religious dogmatism. It will survive the attacks of modern social movements, for it aims at human unity through the spirit.

It is the pride of Hindu India that for centuries it has been able to produce individuals in every part of the country who embody the highest religious qualities. Their serenity and charm, their courtesy and grace, their broad rationality and forbearance in

spite of their own austere and ascetic lives, are rare qualities we usually look for in vain in these days in other parts of the world. It is the tragedy of India that while its culture produced individuals who had something undeniably attractive and superior, it did not develop a high civic or national sense. In its social organization, it put the Brahman above the Kshatriya, the power of reasonableness above that of force. It believed in the efficacy of virtue and of non-violent means. Meekness, which is not to be confused with timidity or cowardice, is the highest sort of strength destined to triumph in the end. If civilization is the meaning and destiny of human history, then it consists in the introduction of human institutions and laws into the wilderness of wild nature. It is the conscious taming of brute force and the substitution of meekness in man's relations in place of the rule of the strong. But while the principles were sound, Hindu India did not develop a strong organization embodying them. As a designer of national life, Hindu civilization was not a success, but its failure is due not to the imperfections of its ideals but to the imperfection of its application of them to the major problems of life.

This disparity between Hindu ideals and practices became manifest when India came under the influence of the West after the advent of the British. Her thinking men felt the undemocratic character of many of the institutions associated with Hindu religion, and traced the weakness of India to lack of social sense and imagination. Western influence widened the horizon of the Indian mind, opened up fresh channels, and gave it a more universal direction. In recent years India has been brought into closer intimacy with world thought, and is confronted by the great religions which still look for inspiration outside India. In the absence of a Hindu state to foster the development of Hindu ideals, the religion falls back for its strength on the power of truth which it embodies and the social cohesion which it engenders. The influence of the West on Hindu *thought* is not considerable, though it has helped Hinduism to restate its fundamentals in terms of world thought, and its appeal to the thinking mind has been very real. But its influence on the social *practices* of Hinduism, in the awakening of its social conscience, has been decisive. It is a challenge making us question our past and discriminate between the living and the dead in it. A society breaks down if its institutions are unable to assimilate the new social forces which they were not originally intended to convey. It is able to adjust itself peaceably to the new changes if its leaders have sufficient creative power. In the renaissance now at work the creative leadership is manifest.

In the great days of Hinduism the religion was not an other-worldly one. For the spiritual experience on which Hindu religion



takes its stand not only reveals to us the splendour of our nature in the solitude of the soul, but attunes us with our fellows in a glowing exaltation of love, and makes life in all its aspects not only beautiful and significant but noble and divine. Eternal life is not escape from time. It is life that we can enter now. It carries with it redemption from the world but not flight from it. Its reality overflows into deeds of life. It impels us to create a genuine brotherhood, a society of men and women knit together by a deeper bond than popular Hinduism with its caste distinctions provides to-day. Its great charter *tat tvam asi*, 'that thou art', is intended to convey that, in the eyes of God, all capacities, all circumstances are accidental. This idea of absolute equality has never yet been achieved, and to-day the main problem of Hindu civilization is to attempt to realize it under the guidance of those who have a true sense of values. When a man is anchored in spirit, his ways are absolute. His love of humanity knows no restrictions of colour or creed. His surrender to the universal purpose knows none of the compromises so common in the ordinary conduct of life. He faces his problems not in the conventional way forced on us by our social environment but in the light of the great eternal things. He would rather suffer a thousand offences than inflict one. He is by nature a revolutionary, for no existent order of life can ever satisfy him. His aspiration, struggle, and suffering will not stop short of the kingdom of justice and love demanding the most radical transformation of man and society, for he belongs already to a kingdom of ends opposed to or above all national states, a kingdom which has an absolute existence of its own, being a society of free personalities united only by a spiritual kinship. It is the Ramarajya or the ideal earthly kingdom and every religious man is a servant of it.

The this-worldly emphasis is most marked in the reform movements. The song of the true Vaishnava, which is a great favourite of Gandhi, gives us a picture of goodness to which his own life is a witness.

'He is the true Vaishnava who knows and feels another's woes as his own,

Ever ready to serve, he never boasts,

He bows to everyone and despises no one, keeping his thought, word, and deed pure,

Blessed is the mother of such an one, he reverences every woman as his mother,

He keeps an equal mind and does not stain his lips with falsehood; nor does he touch another's wealth,

No bonds of attachment can hold him,

Ever in tune with Ramanama, his body possesses in itself all places of pilgrimage,

Free from greed and deceit, passion and anger, this is the true Vaishnava.'

The late Mr. Tilak, in his exposition of the *Bhagavad-gita*, and several other commentators point out how the aim of the *Gita* is to exalt an activistic ethic. The fatalistic interpretation of the law of Karma is repudiated by modern Hindu thinkers. It is misinterpreted if it is used to justify the degradation of the outcaste and the widow, the blind, and the cripple. From the dawn of reflection in India, there have been schools of thought which stressed the efficacy of human action. It is a cardinal principle that neither fate nor gods but we ourselves shape our destiny. The ascetic bias which has dominated Hindu religious practice for some centuries is corrected in the light of the eternal truths of Hinduism. The old ideal of a saint, an emaciated hero, contemplating eternity, remote from the world, in some forest of giant trees or in some cave or mountain height, is not popular to-day. Nor is it an adequate representation of the Hindu principle. While it requires us to discipline all sides of our nature, to regulate bodily appetites and cravings, it does not ask us to suppress our humanity. As the *Bhagavad-gita* says: 'Yoga is not for him who eats too much, nor for him who eats too little. It is not for him who sleeps too much, nor for him who keeps vigils too long. But for the man who is temperate in his food and recreation, who is restrained in all his actions and who has regulated his sleep and vigils, Yoga puts an end to all sorrow.' It justifies domestic affections, family ties, love of home and friends. The more we cherish them the more are we near to our spiritual perfection. Finer spirits in India have on the whole tended to spend their energies more on soul development than on social reform or national progress. The saint must enrich human life by patterns of behaviour in this world, motivated by visions of another. Even the Advaita Vedanta, which emphasizes the oneness of the subject, does not say that the object is illusory. The object is discrete. It is not a bare multiplicity, which would be unthinkable. The cosmic process is not a meaningless one but aims at the realization of an ideal. Earthly life is not to be regarded as illusory or indifferent; it has a positive value for the evolution of the soul. Hinduism does not, as some humanists do, look upon the enjoyment of earthly life as the highest end of man, but neither does it look upon mortification of life as the goal of human aspiration. Religion is a healthy harmony of life.

The practical results of this whole movement can be seen in the



endeavours to remove the disabilities from which a section of the community called the Harijans suffered for centuries, to raise the status of women and give them increased rights consistent with their human dignity and right to happiness, to modify the laws of marriage, to improve the ritual in temples, and to effect innumerable reforms which are all intended to give the whole Hindu community a progressive and democratic outlook. As a result, Hinduism has become an ethical religion with a social gospel. The influence of the West here is considerable. It has brought about a revaluation of India's religious heritage. The less worthy elements in popular religion are being gradually eliminated and the sublime thoughts of the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad-gita* are receiving emphasis. It is no small achievement to help a great religion to purify itself, and this work of purification cannot be estimated by statistics.

## CHAPTER X

### THE HINDU SOCIAL SYSTEM

TWO distinctive characteristics of the Hindu social system, which differentiate it from those of western countries, are its intimate connexion with religion and the fact that it is not so much a synthesis of individuals as of groups. It is a socio-religious system, for social institutions have a religious basis and the prescriptions of social rules have religious sanctions. The *Sastras*, or scriptures containing the social code, are believed to be of divine origin and are still appealed to as an ultimate and indisputable authority, even though the great majority of Hindus have only a meagre knowledge of their contents,<sup>1</sup> and the state of society to which they were intended to apply has long ceased to exist, if indeed it ever existed.<sup>2</sup> The cardinal institutions are consecrated by religious associations. The caste system, the steel frame of Hinduism, is held to have been divinely ordained and is connected with the law of Karma, according to which a man's status in this life is determined by his actions in past lives. The family system has a religious significance, one of its essential purposes being to secure the salvation of the spirits of past members by the offering of oblations. The family property is intended for the spiritual benefit of the dead as well as the temporal benefit of the living, and the right of inheritance is regulated with reference to the spiritual benefit to be conferred on former members of the family. The institution of marriage again is not merely hallowed but enjoined by religion. Before all things it is necessary that a man should beget sons or he will be damned hereafter. For parents to have unmarried daughters is a plain dereliction of religious duty and a social shame. Marriage is therefore practically universal. It is a state of life to which all are called; there is what to the western mind seems a kind of hymenomania. Other customs which originated in economic, hygienic, or eugenic reasons have also acquired a religious connotation, so that convention assumes the appearance of revealed religion.

<sup>1</sup> They have been described by a Hindu writer as 'a mysterious body of works', which 'are on the lips of every Hindu, though but few know exactly what they contain'. N. P. Bose, *A History of Hindu Civilization during British Rule* (Calcutta, 1894), vol. i, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> The principal authority is the work known as the Laws (or Institutes) of Manu. This, it has been pointed out, 'undoubtedly enshrines many genuine observances of the Hindoo race, but the opinion of the best contemporary orientalists is that it does not, as a whole, represent a set of rules ever administered in Hindostan. It is, in great part, an ideal picture of that which, in the view of the Brahmins, ought to be the law.' H. S. Maine, *Ancient Law* (1891), pp. 17-18.



The chief social institutions, as they existed in their integrity, were not individualist but collectivist. The unit was not the individual but the family, which regulated the relations of its members *inter se*. The inter-relations of different families were governed by the village community and the caste, the former of which was a collection of families organized for the purposes of communal self-government, while the latter was an aggregation of families united by rules as to marriage, diet, occupation, and intercourse with the rest of the community, but not localized like the village community. All three, the family, the caste, and the village community, maintained ideological control over the individual, who was bound to conform to their standards. The individual scarcely existed except as a member of a group. Self-determination was only possible within the limits which the latter imposed; individual development was conditioned by the obligations imposed by its requirements of social solidarity. The village community was only partially a social institution. It was more an economic and administrative organization, over which the State had a right of control though this was sparingly exercised. The affairs of the caste and the family, however, were matters with which the State had no direct concern. The relations of their members were governed not by secular law but by Hindu law and customary regulations. The British government, like its predecessors, followed a policy of non-intervention with regard to these two institutions. It came into direct contact with the village community and, by bringing it within the administrative nexus, destroyed its distinctive character as a self-governing institution, but it left the family and caste system alone. The changes which have taken place in these two institutions are therefore attributable for the most part not to any governmental action or the application of western principles of government but to other factors, mostly of a sociological nature.

A demand for the reform of the social system was created by the enlightened ideas introduced by western thought and by acquaintance with the humanitarian principles of Christianity. In some cases this was connected with religious movements, such as the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal and the Prarthana Samaj in Bombay, which set on foot a social reform movement by advocating such measures as the abolition of caste distinctions, the prohibition of polygamy, the removal of the ban on widow marriage, and the prohibition of child marriage. In North India again the Arya Samaj made social reform part of its programme, and advanced it by encouraging the remarriage of widows and discouraging the marriage of children, by allowing intermarriages between members of different sub-castes or castes, and, during the present century,

by efforts for the uplift of the depressed classes. Other movements have been of a secular character but bear the same impress of humanitarian ideas derived from the West. Social reforms have long been prominent on the programme of the Indian National Social Conference. Associations have been formed in order to create conditions favourable to reform by the education of public opinion. Organizations have been started with philanthropic objects of a practical nature, such as Depressed Classes Missions and the Servants of India Society, the last of which requires every member to undergo training for five years, and at the end of that period to dedicate himself to the service of India and to take a vow that he will regard all Indians in the light of brothers and work for the advancement of all without distinction of caste and creed. Social service has become a gospel among some of the younger intellectuals, in whose minds the old ideas of caste exclusiveness seem to be giving place to a spirit of social democracy.

Healthy as has been the influence of the societies which seek to advance the cause of social reform, it is exercised mainly among the educated classes, and even among them propaganda has had little appreciable effect in questions connected with marriage. The age of marriage has been raised, but this is due mainly to other causes associated with education, economic pressure, and the break-up of the joint-family system. That system produces conditions favourable to early marriage, as a young bridegroom can be supported from family funds and marriage has not therefore to be postponed until he is in a position to support a wife, as it has often to be when the property ceases to be joint. The marriage of youths, moreover, is now frequently put off till they have received a university education, and on its completion they are less willing to marry children with undeveloped brains. The rise in the cost of living, combined with higher standards and the competitive prices commanded by well-educated bridegrooms, has operated in the same direction. The raising of the age of marriage among the higher castes from which the more highly educated are mostly drawn has had repercussions on the lower castes, which are generally anxious to assimilate their usages to those of their superiors as a means of enhancing their social prestige. Some therefore tend to raise the age of marriage, though others reduce it in obedience to the rules of orthodoxy laid down by the Brahmans, according to which the marriage of girls before the age of puberty is a religious obligation.

The education of opinion in social matters is a slow and difficult business, as may be seen from the history of the efforts to suppress female infanticide. This was a practice limited to certain castes in certain localities, such as the Rajputs in Kathiawar, Rajputana, and the United Provinces, the Mers of Merwara, and the Bedis,



Khatris, and Jats of the Punjab. It was an outcome of the custom of hypergamy, by which a woman must be married to a man of a group superior, or at least equal, to her own. The choice of husbands in the higher groups was necessarily narrow, and the expense of obtaining them was enhanced by the operation of the law of supply and demand. In addition to this, the customary code of social honour required lavish expenditure on marriage festivities. Faced with the possibility of being unable to fulfil a religious obligation or, if they did so, of being put to ruinous expense, fathers solved their dilemma by killing their daughters at or soon after their birth. Infanticide was especially prevalent in the United Provinces and the Punjab. In the Benares division, for instance, inquiries showed that in 62 out of 308 villages not a single girl under six years of age could be found; in another part of the division there was a community of Rajputs of which it was reported: 'Not only are there no girls to be found in their houses now, but there never have been any, nor has such an event as the marriage of a daughter taken place for more than 200 years.'<sup>1</sup>

Efforts to suppress the crime by the rigorous application of the criminal law were frustrated by the difficulty of detection and proof. The British administrators therefore did their best to effect reform by personal influence; those who do not respect the law will often respect the word of a magistrate. Endeavours were made to produce a change in the feelings of the communities concerned and to secure abandonment of the custom by consent by teaching them to regard the murder of infant daughters as a disgrace as well as a crime, and by inducing them to agree to a common and reasonable scale of marriage expenses. The practice, however, was neither suppressed by executive or legal action nor given up by consent, and special legislation had to be undertaken (Act VIII of 1870) eighty years after attention was first directed to it. Since then infanticide has been steadily on the decrease, but it has been a slow process; in 1911 the Census Superintendent of the Punjab remarked, 'Fifty years after Lawrence denounced the murder of female infants we are still discussing the best methods of putting down this inhuman practice'.<sup>2</sup> Its abandonment is due to a combination of causes, including the operation of the Act, the pressure of public opinion, the influence of more enlightened ideas, and, even more perhaps, the relaxation of rules of hypergamy by the castes concerned owing to the action of the law of supply and demand, which has taken a direction opposite to that already noticed, the paucity of women having given them a marketable value and enabled parents to demand bride-prices.

<sup>1</sup> *Census Report of India for 1911*, Part I, p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> *Punjab Census Report for 1911*, Part I, p. 243.

Among the more progressive Hindus there has long been a strong body of opinion that private efforts should be reinforced by legislation. For about a century they have been imbued with the idea that social reform can and should be promoted by State action. This conception of the functions of the State is of western and not Indian origin; it follows the doctrine of European political philosophers of the eighteenth century that human nature can be improved indefinitely by means of legislation. It is alien to Hindu thought and practice, according to which social institutions have religious authority and it is the duty of the secular power to maintain, and not to change, the existing social order. The demand for legislation has consequently been opposed by the orthodox and conservative majority, whose view is that social customs have the sanction of a divine and unchangeable law. Social reform is therefore not a legitimate function of a secular power, and it has been further objected that the British government is in any case precluded from taking action by its pledge to respect religious observances. The government for its part, so long as it was under purely British control, generally sided with the opponents of change, adhering to the policy of non-intervention for reasons of expediency as well as principle. It was its established principle not to interfere with personal laws and customs unless it was certain that change was desired by the community or a majority of it. It was anxious not to offend religious susceptibilities by measures which might be held to clash with the higher law of religious obligation. It was also reluctant to add to the statute book acts which without the support of popular opinion would be doomed to sterility. It had justification for its attitude. Legislation by itself is not sufficient to change the settled habits of a people. There must be an enlightened and educated opinion behind the law if it is to be operative. Human nature does not automatically change or respond in the desired manner merely because of man-made law, especially if the latter is held to run counter to the dictates of religion. There has, however, been a simple faith in the virtue of legislation in the minds of Hindu reformers—a belief like that expressed in the remark of the Lord High Executioner: 'When your Majesty says—"Let a thing be done", it is as good as done—practically, it is done—because your Majesty's will is law.' There has been a feeling that the British government was unduly slow in adapting the law to enlightened standards and so purging the social system of objectionable features. It has even been criticized by the advocates of reform as being more of a brake on social advance than a power making for progress. It departed from its policy of non-intervention sufficiently to agree to some permissive legislation, which merely removed restrictions on certain practices



and gave legal validity to acts if and when taken by Hindus on their own initiative. It was chary of legislation which would prohibit and punish practices which were regarded as positive duties or sacred obligations unless the dictates of morality overrode the injunctions of religion.

A typical example of the former kind of legislation is the Widows' Remarriage Reform Act of 1856. It was added to the statute book in response to a humanitarian movement headed by Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, which was intended to improve the lot of child widows and save them from the doom of perpetual widowhood. The Act merely allowed widows to remarry if they so desired and declared the legitimacy of their issue if they did so. Actually remarriage was already allowed by many of the lower castes and the Act affected only those who followed Brahmanical canons. It was opposed before its passage into law on the ground that it contravened the ban on such marriages, and its promoter was exposed to obloquy and abuse. After its enactment it remained a dead letter simply because it ran counter to the general sentiment that marriage is indissoluble by death. Its strongest opponents were women themselves, whose view is summarized in the words: 'We are born once, we die once, and we are married once.' It was therefore practically inoperative in spite of efforts made by progressive Hindus to popularize the idea of widow remarriage by educating public opinion. A Widow Marriage Association was started as early as 1861 in Bombay; similar bodies have been organized elsewhere, and the Arya Samaj has put the marriage of widows on its list of social reforms. But, though such marriages do take place, they are still exceptional among the higher castes; and even those lower castes which allow them tend to give them up, believing that if they assimilate their social observances to those of the higher castes, they will enhance their prestige and facilitate their rise to the same level as the latter.

Prohibitive legislation is typified by the measures connected with the age of consent, the history of which is of especial interest as showing the reactions of the community at different periods to western ideas about the treatment of women. The evils of child marriage and premature maternity were obvious, but until 1929 they were dealt with in an indirect manner, viz. by legislation which did not prohibit or penalize the marriage of children but made it a penal offence for a man to have intercourse with a girl below a certain age and, consequently, for a husband to consummate marriage with a child wife. These measures were promoted by men who were influenced by western humanitarian thought. The first, which fixed the age of consent at ten years, was enacted in 1860 at the instance of Pandit Iswar Chandra

Vidyasagar supported by progressive Hindus. Thirty years later a Parsi gentleman, Mr. Malabari, took up the cause of Hindu girl wives from philanthropic motives. The government sided with the reformers, largely owing to the feeling aroused by shocking cases in which young girls had suffered physical injury or had even been done to death by their husbands in the exercise of marital rights. A Bill was introduced, and passed in 1891, which raised the age of consent from ten to twelve years. The measure was hotly opposed on the ground that the early marriage of their daughters was an obligation imposed on parents by religious ordinance. Opposition was particularly strong in Bengal, where a mass meeting of protest attended by 50,000 people indicated the feeling aroused. Reactionaries raised the cry that religion was endangered and that the measure would cause an outbreak like that of the Mutiny. 'For months rebellions and civil wars were wildly talked about as the inevitable result of this social reform movement.'<sup>1</sup> The agitation was disregarded by government, whose position was strengthened by the knowledge that it had behind it the support of an influential volume of opinion, particularly in the Bombay Presidency. After the Bill had passed into law the clamour died down, and early marriages continued as before, the people in general being absolutely ignorant of the law on the subject. The age of consent was subsequently raised to thirteen years by a government measure enacted in 1925, but the Age of Consent Committee reported in 1929 that the law on the subject was practically unknown throughout the country, knowledge of it being confined to judges, lawyers, and a few educated men.

The position was different in 1929 when the Child Marriage Restraint Act was passed, a measure which prohibits and penalizes the marriage of females under fourteen years of age and of males under eighteen years.<sup>2</sup> In the meantime the age of marriage had risen among the educated classes owing to the causes already mentioned, but early marriages were general among the great majority. There were, however, no wild alarmist rumours, although there was naturally agitation against the Bill, which was denounced as an anti-religious measure which cut at the root of Hinduism. The immediate result of its introduction was an enormous extension of the practice against which it was directed. In anticipation of its enactment there was a rush to get girls married before they attained the age of fourteen years. There was what was called an orgy of infant marriages, the effect of which was seen in the figures of the

<sup>1</sup> R. P. Karkaria, *India: Forty Years of Progress and Reform* (1896), p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> This was a private measure and is generally known as the Sarda Act after its mover.



census held in 1931, a year after the Act came into force. These showed that over 12 million girls were married before the age of thirteen;<sup>1</sup> and the unprecedented number of early marriages which had taken place made it impossible to distinguish the operation of other factors which might have been at work either to raise or reduce the age of marriage. Subsequent experience has proved that the Act has done little or nothing to produce reform partly because of the absence of machinery to enforce its provisions, but still more because it is in conflict with what the generality of the people consider a higher law, obedience to which is a religious duty.

Similar results followed an Act on the same lines which had been in force in Baroda since 1904. Its penal provisions were ineffective, for parents were ready to face the risk of fines rather than postpone the marriage of their daughters and, if prosecuted and convicted, regarded the fines which were imposed merely as an unavoidable addition to the marriage expenses. The failure of this Act led to the enactment by the State of another measure in 1928 declaring the marriages of children less than eight years of age null and void and rendering persons who abetted such marriages liable to imprisonment and fine. In British India, however, opinion has not advanced so far as to set aside a religious ceremony of marriage, and to treat it as invalid and inoperative, however early the age at which it is contracted. Baroda has gone far further than British India in regard to social legislation. It has not hesitated to deal with the caste system by a law passed in 1933, of which the object is expressed by its title, the Caste Tyranny Removal System. It is a measure which is intended to afford protection from the menace of social ostracism and other forms of intimidation and to impose legal restraints on further sub-divisions of castes and sub-castes. Substantive amendments have also been made in Hindu law by measures which enlarge the property rights of women and affect their marriage relations, one being a Divorce Act passed in 1931. The States generally, however, have not followed the lead of Baroda, partly owing to the absence of any articulate expression of opinion in favour of State intervention and partly, no doubt, owing to the fact that the Princes generally are not idealists but have a shrewd sense of practical politics.

With the increase of the representative element in the legislatures there is a growing tendency to regard those bodies as the instruments of social progress. The scrupulous observance by the

<sup>1</sup> The real number must have been greater. Many parents who had married their daughters while under age returned them as unmarried for fear of a possible prosecution with the result that the total number of married women, as shown in the census statistics, was more than half a million less than that of the married men—an anomaly which led to a newspaper correspondence discussing the question whether the disproportion was due to polyandry.

judicial courts of the provisions of Hindu law is objected to on the ground that it has preserved and crystallized effete customs and prevented natural development in adjustment to changing conditions. It is represented that the judicial administration has given a rigidity to ancient usages which they would otherwise not have possessed and that the time is ripe for amending legislation of a revolutionary character. There have already been a number of legislative proposals challenging the doctrines of the orthodox and conservative school, and more are expected under the new constitution. As remarked by Mr. K. M. Panikkar, until it came into operation the main body of Hindu institutions, like caste and the joint family, had been left untouched except incidentally.

'But the new constitution completely changes the position. What a government, however well-meaning but alien in composition, can never undertake with success, the new legislatures, composed entirely of elected representatives, will be forced by the pressure of political opinion to take up. Hindu orthodoxy was right in apprehending that the creation of such a machinery is the greatest challenge it has ever had to face. Never before has there been an authority in India which claimed power to change the old social institutions of the Hindus.'

Events have proved the correctness of this forecast. In 1938 three private Bills on the subject of polygamy<sup>1</sup> were before the central legislature. One was representative of the more orthodox school, for it allowed of second marriages taking place in certain cases with the permission of a District Judge but otherwise prohibited them. The other two admitted no exceptions and prohibited a second marriage unless the previous marriage had been dissolved. They were therefore revolutionary, for, in order to ensure monogamy, they contemplated divorce, whereas orthodox Hinduism allows of no severance of the marriage tie. In 1939 again an Anti-Dowry Act was passed in Sind which makes it a penal offence to give or accept any payment as a part of a contract of betrothal or marriage and also penalizes the giving or accepting of any sums in excess of prescribed maxima when a girl is betrothed or married. In the same year a Bill was introduced in Bombay for the prevention of bigamous marriages and another enabling marriages to be dissolved by divorce or declaration of nullity. Yet another divorce Bill has been brought forward in the central Legislative Assembly, but the bulk of Hindu opinion has

<sup>1</sup> 'Hindu Society and the New Constitution', *Asiatic Review* (1936), p. 346.

<sup>2</sup> This is a practice which is rare among Hindus but which is permissible in certain circumstances, e.g. when a wife suffers from an incurable disease or has not borne male children, her husband may take a second wife. In some cases the second marriage takes place with the acquiescence or active approval of the first wife, who is as anxious as her husband that he should have a son to make the offerings necessary for his salvation after death.



been against it both because of the principle involved and of objections to particular provisions, e.g. it gave the right to divorce only to women and conferred no such right on men, while it made no provision for such important matters as succession, maintenance, and the custody of children. The law of Hindu marriage is bound up with questions of property, succession, and maintenance, and on this account the Assembly resolved in April 1939 to appoint a committee to report on the reforms necessary to improve the rights of Hindu women as regards residence and maintenance and on the legislative measures required to give effect to any reforms it might recommend. It will be for the future to show what the outcome will be, but it may be said that in advanced circles opinion seems to be moving in the direction of reform, leading, for example, to suggestions that there should be a comprehensive law of divorce combining Hindu and western ideas, recognizing as grounds for divorce not only the circumstances which allow of a second marriage under Hindu law but also those set forth in the English Matrimonial Causes Act of 1937, and so framed as to avoid the rigour of the English law and the laxity of the laws of some of the United States of America.<sup>1</sup>

With these preliminary remarks we may proceed to examine the extent to which different institutions have resisted or yielded to the forces of change and dissolution. To begin with the most important, the caste system, it may be said at once that it is difficult to state with certainty how far some of the changes which have taken place can be attributed to internal forces or to external influences. Long before India had any direct connexion with the West there were internal movements directed against the inequalities of the system and the privileged position of the Brahman, who was at its head. Reformers denounced caste and preached the brotherhood of man at the same time that they inculcated the unity of God; the movements they set on foot were social as well as religious revolts. In some cases, it is true, the idea of equality was more abstract than practical. The conception was not so much one of the social equality of all men as of the equality of worshippers in the sight of God; its basic principle was that by faith and virtuous living all castes become equally pure. It is also true that sects such as the Lingayats and Kabirpanthis, which, in the twelfth and fifteenth centuries respectively, rejected caste distinctions, reintroduced them in course of time and fell again under the enduring spell of the caste system. But the fact remains that from time to time there were movements for the abolition of caste distinctions and for the denial of the innate superiority and

<sup>1</sup> See Sir P. S. Sivaswami Aiyar, 'Legislation for Hindu Women', *Indian Review* (Madras, 1938), p. 796.

sacerdotal authority of the Brahman. Such movements, however, were sporadic and the caste system, far from being weakened, acquired greater strength and rigidity in resistance to the pressure of Islam in territories under Muslim rule. In any case their effect was only partial and in no way comparable to the widely diffused influence exercised by the intellectual and economic forces which have been brought to bear on India by modern contacts with the West.

It is also necessary to point out that the caste system is not so immutable as is commonly supposed. As Senart observed, there are two great conflicting currents of influences. On the one hand, it is pervaded by a hierarchical principle which tends to conservatism and stability. On the other hand, it is incessantly stirred and modified by the leaven of reform, and the composition, rank, and occupations of the castes are susceptible of change.<sup>1</sup> Even the Laws of Manu recognized the possibility of a change of social status;<sup>2</sup> cases are known of castes whose wealth and power enabled them to rise to a position of dignity commensurate with their prosperity, and Hindu Rajas exercised the power of elevating castes to higher rank. It is, moreover, not altogether correct to say that a man's profession is fixed for him by his caste and that he has no choice in regard to his occupation in life. In a static society, in which there was only a limited number of professions and little necessity to change them, they naturally tended to become hereditary; but even before the economic system was affected by western influences, there was considerable latitude. Neither sanctity of custom nor caste prescription debarred change of occupation within certain limits, i.e. an occupation could not be adopted which was held to be polluting or degrading. The Brahman in the eighteenth century was indifferently a merchant, a banker, or a soldier as well as a religious teacher or priest. The tailor did not have to stick to his bench or the cobbler to his last from life to death. Men adapted themselves to their economic environment, as was forcibly pointed out by Colebrooke in his *Remarks on the Present State of Husbandry and Commerce in Bengal* in 1795, when western influences had scarcely come into operation. Every profession, he said, was, with few exceptions, open to every description of persons; the hereditary profession of a caste was entitled merely to a preference. Little attention was paid to traditional limitations; occupations and professions were changed frequently and indefinitely, Brahmans being employed in servile

<sup>1</sup> *Caste in India* (1930), p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> 'As the son of a Sudra may attain the rank of a Brahman, and as the son of a Brahman may sink to a level with Sudras, even so must it be with him who springs from a Kshatriya, even so with him who was born of a Vaisya.'



offices, while Sudras adopted superior professions without let or hindrance. The latitude in choice of professions has since been extended owing to the change in economic conditions and the development of new industries and other means of earning a livelihood. The adoption of an occupation other than the hereditary one is tolerated, even by the functional castes, provided that it is one which is recognized as being neither dishonourable nor under the stigma of pollution, as the social gradation of castes still depends largely on the relative purity or impurity of the pursuits of their members.<sup>1</sup>

There has long been a natural tendency on the one hand to rebel against excessive regimentation of life by caste rules and on the other to adjust standards to current conditions and to modify or abrogate rules which are incompatible with them. As early as 1818, when English education had not penetrated even the upper strata of Hindu society, and when economic conditions were still practically unchanged, transgressions against the rigid rules of caste were so numerous and so patent that the Baptist missionary William Ward anticipated that the caste system might disappear within a measurable distance of time. Groups of Hindus of different castes met in secret to eat and smoke together; they rejoiced, he said, in having an opportunity of indulging their social feelings and enjoyed a kind of triumph in having 'leaped the fence' and in being able to do so repeatedly with impunity. There were thousands of men in Calcutta and other large towns, as well as in the Indian army, who took advantage of their absence from home to set aside the rules about food and drink. Cohabiting, eating, and smoking with women of other castes were so common that they were generally connived at.

'Let us rejoice', wrote Ward, 'that the rust of those fetters has nearly eaten them through; there are indications in the present state of Hindoo society which evince that, on account of the number of transgressors, those barbarous laws cannot be much longer enforced. . . . No one will be surprised to hear that, although the Hindoos give one another credit, as a matter of convenience, for being in possession of caste, and though there may be an outward and, in the higher orders, an insolent show of reverence for its rules, if the matter were to be searched into, and the laws of the caste were allowed to decide, scarcely a single family of Hindoos would be found in the whole of Bengal whose caste is not forfeited; this is well known and generally acknowledged.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr. S. V. Ketkar goes so far as to say: 'To-day a man can take to any occupation without changing his caste. The only exceptions are that no one of a good caste would like to take to the occupation of shoemaker or scavenger, and no one who is not born a Brahmin would be accepted as a priest in the community.' *History of Caste in India* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1909), vol. i, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos* (Serampore, 1818), pp. xi-xii.

A little over half a century later we find a Hindu writer, Shib Chunder Bose, using somewhat similar language.

'The rules of caste', he said, 'are not now strictly observed, and their observance is scarcely compatible with the spirit of the age; and in one sense we have scarcely a genuine Hindoo in Bengal, especially amongst those who live in Calcutta and the district towns. The distinction of caste is more honoured in the breach than in the observance of it.'

Both these writers referred mainly to urban life in Bengal, and conditions were very different elsewhere. If we consider only urban and industrial centres and the more advanced sections of the educated classes much the same account could be given at the present day, except that the social intercourse between members of different castes is no longer secret but open and public. As in 1818, caste restrictions are ignored by men who have left their villages and are free from the restraining influence of their home surroundings. Now, as then, it is affirmed that the caste system is in course of dissolution. Although, however, the restrictions of caste have been relaxed among the educated classes and in cities and towns, they are still observed by the rural masses which account for the majority of the population. In the villages custom and tradition still maintain their rule in spite of certain concessions to convenience or expediency, particularly in matters of food and drink.

Numerous instances might be given of the way in which under the conditions created by British rule caste conventions have yielded to force of circumstances and caste rules have been relaxed when it is a matter of convenience or material interest. Years before the Mutiny sepoy in the Indian army had no scruples about biting off the ends of cartridges, although they knew that the paper was made from rags by men of the lowest castes employed in the arsenals; it was only the smearing of the cartridges with grease that was intolerable. They had no objection to wearing leather cross-belts though leather has such a peculiar power of pollution that, according to Brahmanical canons, a man should not merely wash his hands but scour them with earth after touching it. In more recent times the attractions of football have triumphed over the prejudice against leather.<sup>2</sup> In the case of imported articles and the products of modern invention the same adaptability has been shown. When potatoes were first introduced, orthodox Brahmans objected to their being eaten, but their prejudice was not shared

<sup>1</sup> Shib Chunder Bose, *The Hindoos as they are* (Calcutta, 1883), p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> When the first game of football was played in Kashmir, there was general consternation when the ball struck a player in the face. The game was stopped and the player purified by bathing, but after this the game was resumed and there were no more interruptions.



by others. Biscuits, artificial ice, soda-water and other aerated drinks have been accepted without question; it has been simply convenient to put the telescope to the blind eye. Tinned food is not on a prohibited list. An adherent of orthodoxy who would not dream of taking food from the hands of a European takes it without compunction out of a tin made in a European or American factory. Caste rules are quietly ignored by patients who take medicines mixed by Muslim or Christian compounders; some will even take beef tea if prescribed by a doctor.

From the very first there were few scruples about railway travel despite the risk of contamination from contact with fellow passengers of low or untouchable caste. Water was taken from municipal pipes, though its use was open to objection because the engines were worked by Englishmen and Muslims, and still more because, when a pipe system was first installed, water was drawn from taps on street hydrants, to which Muslims and Hindus of every caste resorted. Some persons went to the trouble and expense of getting in Ganges water rather than risk pollution, but these were exceptions and the public generally took the pipe water without cavilling about it. The question was indeed raised whether the use of trains and of pipe water was permissible, but in each case the Brahmins' verdict was favourable. It was declared that the merits of pilgrimage would not be lost by a railway journey, and the problem of pipe water was solved by a pious fiction that the water-rate was a penance which atoned for the use of taps. In both cases the Brahman exponents of orthodoxy merely gave sanction to practices which had been adopted without reference to them or regard to their canons. Both are typical examples of what Sir Alfred Lyall called the extraordinary elasticity of practical Hinduism, by which fictions and anomalies can be invented or tolerated at need.<sup>1</sup>

The same spirit of accommodation was shown in regard to anatomical surgery when the Calcutta Medical College was opened in 1835, and high-caste Hindus began to handle the dissecting knife as part of the training in European surgery. The opening of this College was a measure taken not, like the adoption of English education, in response to a demand, but in face of a strong opposition due to the feeling that loss of caste was an inevitable consequence of contact with dead bodies. The day the first dissection took place, the College had to be closed to prevent the irruption of an angry mob. But there was no lack of medical students, and western surgery won its way into favour as the practical value of anatomy was recognized. Orthodox opinion adjusted itself to new conditions and the *Sastras*, 'with the elasticity peculiar to them',

<sup>1</sup> V. Chirol, *Indian Unrest* (1910), p. xiii.

were made to declare that the dissection of human bodies for medical purposes was not prohibited.<sup>1</sup> Another and more recent instance of adaptation to change is the expiation for voyages overseas to western countries.<sup>2</sup> Such a voyage used to entail loss of caste unless the traveller on his return home submitted to a purifying ceremony reserved for heinous offences. He had to consume what has been called a 'penitential pill', a nauseous mixture of five products of the cow, viz. milk, curds, melted butter, dung, and urine; as a concession to weakness in these degenerate days sugar and honey have been substituted for the last two. With the increasing frequency of visits to Europe the standard of strictness has been relaxed, and the Brahmans, yielding to the force of opinion, condone what they cannot prevent and either pass over the offence altogether or prescribe some easy or nominal expiation such as the payment of a fee or the tonsure of the head. This is a modern innovation. When Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea, who belonged to one of the highest orders of Brahmans, returned from England in 1871, without undergoing the ceremony, his family was practically outcasted. The eating of forbidden food was not objected to.

'Hindu society said nothing, winked at it, forgot and forgave. A visit to England, however, was a new form of heterodoxy to which our society had not yet become accustomed. . . . In the meantime a silent and stupendous change has taken place. A sea-voyage or a visit to Europe no longer involves the loss of caste. Among the Brahmans, especially in the *Mofussil*,<sup>3</sup> there may be some squeamishness in the matter; but among other castes a man may visit any part of the world he likes, cross the seas as often as he pleases, and yet retain his social status as a member of the caste.'<sup>4</sup>

Except in the first few years of their rule the British did not attempt to exercise any jurisdiction in caste matters, and indeed abdicated certain functions which had been exercised by previous rulers. In the time of the Mughal empire the Court at Delhi had been a supreme authority in caste matters; in Hindu principalities a man who had been excommunicated for breach of caste rules could not be readmitted to caste communion without the sanction of the ruler—a practice which still survives in some States.<sup>5</sup> In Bengal and Bihar the British government at first continued the practice by which, when a man had been outcasted, he

<sup>1</sup> C. E. Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India* (1838), p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Voyages to eastern countries such as Burma, Ceylon, China, and Japan, and to countries which were undiscovered till modern times, such as Australia, are not subject to this rule.

<sup>3</sup> Rural areas.

<sup>4</sup> *A Nation in Making* (1925), pp. 25, 26.

<sup>5</sup> *CL Punjab Census Report for 1911*, Part I, pp. 419, 426.



could not be readmitted to caste communion without the concurrence of the government as the supreme civil power. This, it was stated in 1769, was 'a political supremacy reserved to themselves by the Mahomedans, which, as it publicly asserts the subordination of the Hindoos, who are so considerable a majority of subjects, ought not to be laid down, though every indulgence and privilege should be otherwise allowed them'. This attitude was obviously inconsistent with the policy of holding the balance evenly between Hindus and Muslims, and in the same year government announced that there was no longer any necessity for publicly asserting the subordination of Hindus to Muslims and that its sanction to restoring the excommunicated to the privilege of caste would therefore not be required. In Calcutta, however, it maintained for some years a special court for the adjudication of caste matters, known as the Caste Cutcherry (i.e. court), which according to Warren Hastings, had existed there from the first establishment of the Company; this court took cognizance only of disputes among the lower castes.<sup>1</sup> The tradition that the ruling power is a supreme authority in caste matters still lingers. It comes into evidence at each successive census, more especially since that of 1901, when a classification of castes according to their social precedence (a kind of warrant of precedence) was made for sociological and ethnological purposes. As soon as census operations begin, the officers in charge of them are besieged with applications from the lower castes claiming a higher status than that which Hindu society allows them. Government and the census officers disclaim any right of adjudication as to social precedence, but their disclaimer has no effect in stemming the flood of memorials which pour in.

The only legislative enactment which has had a direct bearing on the caste system is the Caste Disabilities Removal Act (XXI of 1850), which laid down that any law or usage which inflicted forfeiture of rights or property, or which might be held to affect any right of inheritance, by reason of anyone being deprived of caste should not be enforceable in the courts of law in British India. This Act was intended to protect converts either to Christianity or Islam from forfeiting rights in consequence of change of creed. It merely prevented any civil or legal disability being attached to those who lost their caste on conversion, and it did not affect those who remained in caste—in other words, practically the whole of

<sup>1</sup> This was referred to by Burke in his speech on the impeachment of Warren Hastings, with characteristic exaggeration. 'Its presidents', he averred, 'had the caste and character of all the people of Bengal in their hands.' It was the 'seat of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, which was to decide upon the castes of all those people, including their rank, their family, their honour and their happiness, and, in their judgement, their salvation hereafter.'

the Hindu population.<sup>1</sup> A certain psychological effect may have been produced by the equality of civil rights secured by British law and by distinctions of caste being ignored by the courts of justice in British India. There is no differentiation between the sweeper and the Brahman, the latter of whom has been deprived of the immunity from capital punishment which he once enjoyed under Hindu rulers and still enjoys in some of the States such as Kashmir. It is difficult to estimate the effect of the application of this principle. Legal equality is a very different thing from social equality; even in western countries social relations do not reproduce the egalitarian principles of their laws. In any case, moreover, Brahmans had no such immunity in territories under Muslim rule, and their peculiar privilege was nullified in practice in some of the Maratha dominions.<sup>2</sup>

The judicial system, however, has done much to impair the authority of the caste *panchayats* or councils, which are the traditional means of maintaining caste discipline and enforcing adherence to caste laws. The latter are overridden by State laws. Lawfully constituted tribunals have an exclusive jurisdiction in civil and criminal matters. The self-constituted courts of the castes are not recognized, and the punishments which they inflict are extra-legal. The authority of the castes has, moreover, been set aside by rulings of the British courts, as, for instance, one which declares that courts of law will not recognize the authority of a caste to declare a marriage void or to give permission to a woman to remarry. It is open to anyone to have recourse to the law courts instead of to the caste tribunals, if the matter is one of which the courts will take cognizance, and anyone aggrieved by a decision of the council can fight his case out again in the courts. On this account the councils themselves are sometimes nervous about exercising their jurisdiction and refer the parties to the courts. Although, however, caste jurisdiction has lost some of its extent and authority, the process has not gone very far.

<sup>1</sup> A similar provision has been contained in Section IX of Regulation VII of 1832, which, however, applied only to the territories included in Bengal. Though the Act was founded on this pre-existing provision, it was opposed with some vehemence by the Hindus of Bengal and Madras, some 60,000 of whom submitted memorials which declared that the measure was anti-religious and was viewed by the whole Hindu population with the utmost horror and dismay.

<sup>2</sup> An officer in the service of the Peshwa wrote: 'I have known them frequently published as delinquents, some even put to death by order of the prince. 'Tis true the blood of a Brahman is never shed but they are dispatched by other means. The late Tuckojee Holkar, who was a Mahratta, put his minister (a Brahman) to death by wrapping him in clothes steeped in oil and setting fire to them. The most common mode is to keep the limbs immersed in cold water until they swell, which carries the party off in a few days.' *Asiatic Annual Register*, 1798-9, p. 127.



The great majority of caste offences are still decided by the *panchayats*, which, it should be added, are practically confined to the lower castes.

Among the higher castes, which have taken advantage of the facilities for an education in English, the ideas which English literature and science convey have had a far greater dissolvent effect. A class has been created which claims the right of private judgement instead of authority as a rule of life and exercises that right by making and breaking its own rules. It refuses to submit to inhibitions which it regards as irrational in themselves or as incongruous anachronisms, particularly in matters of food, drink, occupations, and social intercourse. Rules on the subject are openly disregarded, at any rate in urban centres, but not the rules as to marriage. Marriages between members of sub-castes of the same caste take place and are increasing in frequency, but inter-caste marriages are still very rare, except among the most advanced and enlightened communities in great cities. The legislature has so far steadily rejected Bills which would legalize marriages between members of different castes. Intellectuals denounce the inequality of the caste system and give theoretical recognition to the principle of equality, but seldom translate theory into practice so far as marriage is concerned. However ready they may be to acknowledge that a man of lower caste is a man and a brother, they draw the line at accepting him as a brother-in-law or a son-in-law. Although, however, the outward observance of caste has been given up by the more highly educated urban classes, those classes are only a minority, and there is very little sign of the infiltration of revolutionary ideas among the rural masses which constitute the greater part of the population. In the villages the caste system still maintains its hold over social life with scarcely any diminution. It is a dominating influence. The masses accept its values, obey its imperatives, and observe its customary standards. As has been well said, it 'continues to control the lives and thoughts of more than 200 out of the 320 millions of India with a persistence and authority undreamed of in the western world'.<sup>1</sup>

A notable exception is the Punjab, where the system has undoubtedly been substantially weakened. It is maintained by the orthodox sections of the Hindu community, but outside their circle there is a tendency to discard the restrictions which it imposes. Some are no longer bound by those which forbid commensality, though they adhere to those which preclude intermarriage, while others recognize no limitations in either respect, and are able to mix and marry with other castes with impunity. The old ideas of pollution are becoming evanescent; members of castes which are

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission* (1930), vol. i, p. 10.

equal or nearly equal in status eat together and intermarry; social stratification is not based on the form of labour, the nature of the occupations which are followed being a secondary consideration. This is more particularly the case in towns and cities; in Lahore the castes generally are said to have ceased to take any notice of breaches of caste rules on the subject of interdining and intermarriage. But the reaction against the observance of the old caste rules also extends to rural areas, so that it may be described as more or less general. 'Nowhere else in Hindu India does caste sit so lightly or approach so nearly to the social classes of Europe.'<sup>1</sup> The breaches already made in social barriers are so extensive that it has been anticipated that though the higher castes may retain their old designations as a traditional distinction, the lower castes will be amalgamated in large democratic castes of uniform status and the rules which prevent intermarriage and commensality will completely disappear.<sup>2</sup>

The Punjab was one of the last parts of British India to come into the circle of British rule and the causes of the change must not be sought only in the economic, educational, and administrative influences which this rule brought to bear. It is probably due in a large measure to peculiarities of the social structure, which retains features derived from tribal organization and is in many ways unlike that of other parts of India. Caste divisions are not impassable and the Brahman has neither the pre-eminence nor the authority he possesses elsewhere: on the contrary, he is cordially disliked by the Jats, who bulk largely in the population. Instead of a multiplicity of distinct castes there is a comparatively small number of great castes with a multiplicity of sub-castes, between which the distinctions are far less rigid than those which separate castes. The Jats alone have 4,500 sub-castes, and other castes which have taken to cultivation are admitted by, and are amalgamated with, them as sub-castes. The lines of demarcation are therefore less precise and the rules as to intermarriage less strict than in other parts where the Hindu population is atomized by a multitude of separate castes; in one area it has been estimated that 75 per cent. of the Jats marry wives who are members of other castes.<sup>3</sup>

The evils of the caste system as a barrier against social progress have long been recognized by the leaders of liberal thought, familiar with the ideas contained in the philosophical and religious systems of the West as well as with its social institutions. In more recent years the feeling against it has been strengthened by the

<sup>1</sup> J. D. Anderson, *The Peoples of India* (1913), p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Punjab Census Report for 1911*, Part I, p. 409.

<sup>3</sup> M. L. Durling, *Rusticus loquitur* (1930), p. 31.



spirit of nationalism, and it has been denounced as an obstacle to political advance. The ground is now taken that social barriers between different classes prevent their fusion and amalgamation in a united nation. The abolition of the system is advocated as essential for national unity.<sup>1</sup> The classification of the Hindu population by castes at each successive census is objected to on the ground that it perpetuates distinctions which should be obliterated. On the other hand, the caste system has its apologists, who stress its merits as the cement of society, which holds Hinduism together and enables it to withstand attacks from without. It is, remarked the Maharajadhiraja of Darbhanga, 'the best and surest safeguard against the spirit of unrest, against the growing bitterness between the classes and the masses, between capital and labour, which is constantly menacing civilization.'<sup>2</sup>

The principle of inequality, which is the fundamental feature of the system, is being attacked from within. In South India there is a movement, called the Self-Respect movement, which is opposed to the religious and social domination of the Brahman and to the artificial distinctions of caste. In North India the lower castes are beginning to rebel against the status of inferiority. They aspire to rank among the higher castes which are believed to represent the superior orders or classes (Brahmans, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas) mentioned in that ancient authority, the Laws of Manu. As a means to this end they endeavour to assimilate their social practices to those of the castes with which they seek equality, e.g. by abandoning occupations considered to be dishonourable, by forbidding widow remarriage, by changing the age of marriage for girls, and in some cases by a change of diet, the eating of meat being given up in favour of vegetarianism. The use of the old and familiar caste names is abandoned; newfangled names are adopted to bolster up the claim of Brahman, Kshatriya, or Vaisya descent; the sacred thread of the twice-born castes is assumed. The adoption of new designations has already gone very far in some parts; in Bihar and Orissa over ten millions, or about one-third of the Hindu population, now try to pass themselves off under newfangled names, and it is anticipated that others will follow their

<sup>1</sup> This, for example, was the ground taken in a resolution passed by the Indian National Social Conference in 1927, which ran: 'This Conference is emphatically of opinion that the caste system is the greatest obstacle in the way of national unity and that national solidarity cannot be achieved unless the caste system is abolished root and branch. This Conference therefore resolves to carry on a vigorous propaganda throughout the country to awaken the intelligentsia, as well as the masses, to the iniquities of the caste system with a view to its abolition.' 'The dream of Indian nationalism', said the leader of the Justice party of Madras in 1931, 'will be realized fully with the passing away of caste from our land.' Sir A. Patro, 'The Justice Movement in India', *Asiatic Review*, January 1932, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Harcourt Butler, *India Insistent* (1931), p. 29.

example.<sup>1</sup> In some cases support for such claims is obtained from Brahman pandits, who give rulings in their favour, often, but not always, for a monetary consideration. The net result is that the old distinctions of rank and precedence are being challenged.

There is an upward surge on the part of lower castes, who refuse to accept the lowly places assigned to them by immemorial tradition. It is not suggested that the caste system should be abolished or that all castes should be put on the same level. The general principle of inequality is not attacked as much as its application in particular cases. The demand is individual, each caste aiming at its own advancement and being either indifferent to the efforts of others or actually hostile to them, for those who are themselves ambitious to rise are opposed to the claims made by lower castes to a rank equal to their own. There is no desire for the derogation of the higher caste, but there is a desire for admission to equality with them and for equal pride of place. The process, in brief, is one of levelling up and not of levelling down. It is a case of social climbing, in which lowliness is ambition's ladder, rather than of protest against the hierarchical gradation of castes as such. At the same time caste consciousness has been accentuated and internal solidarity increased by the establishment of caste associations, modelled on western lines and organized, like other bodies of a social or political nature, to form centralizing agencies for the co-ordination of measures intended to promote the interests of individual castes. Their main object is to raise the status of the caste by common action. Social reforms, economic betterment, and educational advance are prescribed in order to promote it. In many ways therefore the associations exercise a healthy influence. Some castes, for example, have made the diffusion of education part of their programme, others resolve to abstain from intoxicants, others again to reduce the scale of expenditure on ceremonies connected with marriage and death.

The movement for the uplift of the untouchables<sup>2</sup> or depressed

<sup>1</sup> For instance, carpenter and blacksmith castes (Barhi, Lohar, and Kamar) call themselves Viswakarma Brahmans, barbers (Hajjams) adopt the name of Nai Brahman or even Kulin Brahman (one of the highest Brahman sub-castes), cow-herds (Goalas) that of Indubansi Kshatriya; even the untouchable Desadh arrogates for himself the name of Gahlot Rajput. One fantastic and ludicrous effort is that of the Pasia, who climb toddy trees to tap their juice and have taken a name meaning the Brahmans who go up in the air.

<sup>2</sup> Some castes are merely untouchables, i.e. contact with them causes pollution. Lower down are castes which cause atmospheric pollution, i.e. they pollute the air for varying distances and may not come nearer to higher castes than the prescribed distance—a disability known in India as unapproachability. The nadir of degradation is reached by a caste in the Tinnevely district of Madras which is 'unseccable', i.e. the mere sight of one of them causes pollution. They are therefore not allowed to leave their homes in the daytime and only go out at night. At the census of 1931 some of them were induced with difficulty to come out in the daylight in order that they might be interviewed by a census officer,



classes, which is the most revolutionary of the movements connected with the caste system, owes more to external influences. It did not start among the untouchables themselves but was initiated by the philanthropic activities of agencies inspired by Christian principles. Government improved the economic condition of some of this submerged class by the abolition of slavery and the legal status of all by ensuring their equality in the eyes of the law; as stated in Chapter II, it was noticeable as early as 1840 that in North India they had acquired a consciousness of their legal rights and took action to enforce them. By throwing its schools open to all, government also gave equality of educational opportunity, of which, however, most untouchables showed little desire to take advantage, while those who wished to do so were prevented by the higher castes, which would not agree to co-education of the clean and the unclean.<sup>1</sup> It was powerless to remove social disabilities, which indeed were at one time not always altogether ignored in the procedure of the courts of law. Sir Herbert Edwardes left it on record that during the eight or nine years that he exercised judicial functions he never remembered witnesses of sweeper castes being allowed to cross the threshold of his court in order to give evidence. They were invariably stopped at the door by the officers of the court and their depositions taken there.<sup>2</sup> This discrimination against untouchables gradually disappeared, but was not altogether eliminated. As late as 1924 cases were known of Hindu judges in outlying places in South India who would not allow either parties or witnesses who were under the stigma of untouchability to enter the precincts of their courts. Their statements were taken by means of intermediaries, who went out to them with the questions and brought back their answers to be recorded by the judge.<sup>3</sup>

The first effective action for their social uplift was taken by missionaries, who laboured among them and converted large numbers to Christianity. The converts acquired a new dignity, and instead of being, as they had been in many cases, dirty, dishonest, drunken, and immoral, became worthy members of society. In order to counteract missionary efforts the Arya Samaj in North

and they were so alarmed at the change from their nocturnal habits and its possible consequences that their whole bodies were shaking and trembling with fear. See *Genius Report of India for 1931* (1933), Part I, p. 483.

<sup>1</sup> *The Servant of India* pointed out on 8 May 1919: 'If the children of the depressed classes are not freely admitted into the schools at present, it is not because the Government refuses them admission but because the social prejudices of the people have not yet yielded to the beneficent policy which the Government have always been desirous of carrying out.' P. N. F. Young and A. Ferrers, *India in Conflict* (1920), p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> *Memorials of the Life and Letters of Sir H. B. Edwardes* (1886), vol. ii, p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> Sir R. Craddock, *The Dilemma in India* (1929), p. 24.

India began to admit them to membership, after first purging them from the taint of pollution by a ceremony of purification (*shuddhi*). A movement for their economic uplift and educational advancement was also started by enlightened Hindu philanthropists, imbued with ideas of social service derived from the West, who established Depressed Classes Missions for their educational and material benefit. This movement, however, did not begin till the early years of the twentieth century. The attitude of the orthodox Hindus remained unchanged. They regarded them as outside the pale both of Hinduism and of caste, even though they might worship Hindu gods and observe the caste system as strictly as higher castes.<sup>1</sup> Even as late as 1910 proposals were made that the depressed classes should not be classed as Hindus in the census, and Raja Rampal Singh in his presidential address to the Indian National Social Conference of that year, while denouncing the suggestion, remarked that it was not surprising that it should have been made when Hindu society was not prepared to treat them as human beings.<sup>2</sup>

The denial of their right to be classed as Hindus was modified by the influence of the advocates of social reform, such as Mr. Gokhale, but even more perhaps by political considerations. After the wide extension of the electoral system in 1921, it was realized that they had a value as voters and that their acceptance as members of the community would help to create, or swell, a Hindu majority in opposition to the Muslims. Democratic principles were accordingly accepted as a matter of political expediency and allowed to override religious objections. In addition to this, the mass movements of untouchables towards Christianity excited alarm, and there was also a feeling that the treatment of untouchables was a national disgrace. If India was to be recognized as coming within the comity of civilized nations, the uplift of the depressed classes must be taken in hand by Indians and not left to foreigners; foreign zeal must therefore be emulated and the reproach of apathy

<sup>1</sup> This attitude may be illustrated by the remarks made by Mr. U. N. Mukherjee in 1909 in *A Dying Race*. 'It is all the same to the Brahmans whether they call themselves Hindus or not. They are just as much untouchables as they were before. Their adoption of Hindu religion causes some amusement and sometimes gives rise to a certain amount of indulgent contempt. . . . They are all equally unclean. Their touch means contamination; water touched by them is polluted. Their religion of Hinduism makes no difference. But the Brahmans are not the only class that holds itself aloof. A Kayasth, Baidya or a member of the Navasakh class will hold himself equally aloof and consider himself polluted by association with the class, just as a Brahman will do. Here as in many other things the Brahman leads and the others follow.' The writer went on to say that an untouchable and a dog would be hunted out of a place of worship with equally little ceremony and equally little hesitation, and if anything the dog would get off more cheaply than the untouchable, who was supposed to know better.

<sup>2</sup> *Indian Review* (Madras, January 1911), p. 48.



removed. Last but not least, there was a genuine humanitarian movement. The legislatures in different provinces began to take up their cause and to affirm their right to equality of treatment in such matters as access to roads, markets, wells, and other sources of water supply, admission to schools, &c., and some States, notably Baroda, Cochin, and Mysore, carried out measures of practical reform. These measures, however, only affected their public disabilities, and not their religious disabilities, such as non-admission to temples, and the social bar, which, for example, led to notices of no admission being put up in cafés, restaurants, and hair-dressing saloons in South India. The removal of untouchability became part of the programme of social reformers, who realized that legislative action was insufficient and that the first and most essential requisite was the education of public opinion.<sup>1</sup> The untouchables themselves began to organize associations and to hold conferences at which the removal of their disabilities and the betterment of their social and economic condition were demanded. The movement was, however, and still is, not altogether general, for many of this unfortunate class either suffer from an inferiority complex which prevents them from asserting themselves or regard their lowly status as part of a natural and immutable dispensation.

The Hindu community as a whole was for some time indifferent to the movement and in some places actively resisted it. In South India the efforts of the untouchables to rise led in many cases to a stronger insistence by the higher castes on keeping them down. Thus, in 1930-1, the Kallars in one district drew up a list of commandments which they required the untouchables to observe. *Inter alia* they were not to wear ornaments of silver or gold or use any but earthenware vessels for cooking, carrying water, &c. They were not to use umbrellas to keep off the rain or the rays of the sun. They were required to go about barefooted wearing neither shoes nor sandals. Their women must not cover their breasts with clothing; men must be bare from the waist upwards and not put on coats, shirts, or vests. Children must not be taught to read. This draconic code was enforced by violence, disobedience being punished by attacks on the persons and property of recalcitrants, by burning their huts, destroying their granaries, and carrying off their cattle. There was no real awakening of public opinion in favour of the

<sup>1</sup> The Indian National Conference of 1927, for example, passed the following resolution: 'This Conference views with grave apprehension the continuance of the practice of untouchability in India and exhorts all Hindus of all classes to remove all restrictions imposed upon the so-called untouchables in the matter of admission to schools, colleges, and hostels, use of public roads, wells, tanks and choultries, and entry into places of worship, and thus bring about a greater solidarity in Hindu society; and it pledges its full support to these classes in every proper effort by them to get rid of these evils.'

movement until Mr. Gandhi galvanized it by showing his readiness to fast to death, first in 1932 in order to secure the adequate political representation of the untouchables, and next in 1933 to rouse his countrymen to a sense of the injustice of their treatment. His extraordinary influence had some practical effect; the untouchables were admitted to temples in a number of places in British India; Travancore and some other States issued proclamations throwing them open to all castes. There was a reorientation of thought in the Hindu community. The more liberal-minded ceased to regard the untouchables as lesser breeds without the law, and there was no longer an atmosphere of uncompromising hostility and intolerance. Some even of the more orthodox who had justified their degradation as the inevitable result of their actions in past lives under the law of Karma, with the working of which it would be impious to interfere, took the view that they might rise, and quite properly be assisted to rise, by the operation of the same law.

Mr. Gandhi's campaign was only a partial success, however, and was not able to break down the adamant force of conservative opinion—what the leaders of the depressed classes at the Round Table Conference called 'the dogged and the determined opposition of the whole mass of the orthodox population'. Temples were held to be desecrated by the admission of untouchables and the orthodox consequently ceased to frequent them; according to Brahmanical precept and practice no worship can be performed nor festivals celebrated in shrines so polluted unless and until a ceremony of purification has been performed. A Bill, which was introduced into the central legislature in 1933, to secure a legal right of entry into temples had to be withdrawn in face of the overwhelming majority of opinion against it. This measure was a challenge to sacerdotal authority and touched on only one aspect of the problem. The leaders of the depressed classes themselves announced that they would only accept it if it was made clear that it was the first step in a general reform of Hindu society involving the break-up of the caste system. Such a demand was not practical politics. The wave of emotional excitement caused by Mr. Gandhi's fasts having died down, the movement lost momentum.<sup>1</sup> He and others have not relaxed their efforts, but in general the response has been disappointing, and the depressed classes themselves have been so disheartened with their results that, at a conference held in Bombay in 1937, their delegates announced that

<sup>1</sup> It was stated in *India in 1933-4*: 'Mr. Gandhi's influence has been steadily on the decline. His fasts no longer attract attention. His attempts to remove untouchability have roused strong opposition; in Bihar and Orissa, a mob broke the windows of his motor-car, and in Poona there were black-flag demonstrations, and a bomb was thrown.'



they were ready to change their religion *en masse*. A resolution was accordingly passed declaring that a change of religion was the only means of securing equality and freedom, and it was declared that, as a first step, they had decided to give up the worship of Hindu deities, the observance of Hindu festivals, and visits to Hindu shrines. In May 1939, again, the depressed classes of Hyderabad presented a memorial to the government of that State in which they declared that, having suffered terribly at the hands of the Hindu community, which had persecuted them socially and opposed the exercise by them of the most elementary rights of citizenship, they no longer belonged to that community. This declaration was probably intended merely for political purposes in order that they might be recognized as a separate community and, as such, have separate representation like the minority communities, such as the Europeans, in British India. It was, however, symptomatic of the spirit of revolt which has been raised, as was also the statement that in the event of a war the depressed classes should follow the Union Jack and not the tricolour flag of the Congress.

The campaign in favour of the uplift of these unfortunate classes is still proceeding. In order to remove the stigma inherent in such names as untouchables, Pariahs, and outcaste Hindus, they have been given the designation of Harijan, meaning Children of God, by Mr. Gandhi. This designation, however, is repudiated by their representatives in South India, who point out that the term is objectionable to Saivites, as Hari is another name for Vishnu and Harijan is therefore only appropriate for Vaishnavas. They prefer such terms as Adi-Dravidas, Adi-Andhras, Adi-Keralas, and Adi-Karnatakas, meaning the original inhabitants of the different territories in which they are found.<sup>1</sup> There are, moreover, various organizations, such as the Servants of India Society and Depressed Classes Missions, which have as their object the amelioration of their lot, and a body known as the All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh has been formed of which the members dedicate themselves to the service of the Harijans.

The campaign was carried a step further towards the end of 1938 in Madras, where the problem is most acute. A comprehensive measure, entitled the Civil Disabilities Removal Act, was passed which provides that no untouchable shall, by reason merely of his being such, be prevented or disabled from holding a public appointment, having access to any public stream, river, well, tank, pathway, sanitary convenience, or means of transport, or any secular institution which the general public have a right to enjoy

<sup>1</sup> They were given the generic name of 'exterior castes' at the census of 1931 and are referred to as 'scheduled castes' in the Government of India Act of 1935.

or have access to. Rules were to be framed under the Act, but there was no provision for breach of such rules, and it remains to be seen how far it will overcome popular prejudice and prove effective. Another Act which has since been passed is the Malabar Temple Entry Act, the main provisions of which are that in Malabar fifty persons in a particular area can make a requisition to the trustees of a temple to take a referendum on the question of opening it to the untouchables, and that a trustee can take the initiative himself and allow their entry unless objections are raised by fifty residents, in which case a referendum has to be made. The opening of temples therefore depends on local option, and time will show how far the Act will be effective and whether or not it will, as foretold by its opponents, prove in actual working a temple-exclusion Act because of the orthodox ceasing to resort to shrines which become polluted by the entry of untouchables.<sup>1</sup> It is at any rate a hopeful sign that the measure was passed with only two Hindu dissentients in a house of 215 members, and that it has been announced by the government that it proposes to introduce similar legislation for other parts of the province, that, in its opinion, temple-entry is a practical proposition, and that it hopes to realize its aim by the year 1941. Already, too, one of the most famous shrines in Tanjore and some ninety other temples have been thrown open to untouchables by a proclamation issued in July 1939 by their hereditary trustee, the senior prince of Tanjore.

Obviously much has to be done before the Hindu public can be converted to this way of thinking or admit the claims of the untouchables to equality of treatment. In some respects their lot has undoubtedly been bettered. They are now found in schools and colleges, where government insists that they should be admitted and treated as equals. But the social and religious bar is still maintained, particularly in South India. A speaker in the Mysore Legislature in 1939 deplored the fact that in spite of propaganda on the platform and in the Press Hindus continued to treat them as worse than cattle. Surveying the progress made during the past six years the Vice-President of the All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh (Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru) observed, in an address delivered at a provincial conference held at Madura in the same year, that there had been substantial progress. The social conscience of educated Hindus, in urban areas at least, had been aroused. A spirit of goodwill and fellowship had been created. Numbers of small temples had been opened. But, she continued:

'I must confess that what we have achieved is by no means satisfac-

<sup>1</sup> It may also be noted that the untouchables have their own places of worship and many of them say that their self-respect will not allow them to go to temples where they are not wanted.



tory. Most of the big and small temples all over India are yet the close preserve of the caste Hindus. Very hard work and great efforts have yet to be put in before we can reach the desired goal. Orthodoxy, though shaken at its citadel, is yet strong enough to thwart us in our purpose. It has to be dispossessed of the place it has acquired in the hearts of the people. . . . In many temples Harijans are not allowed to go even up to the limit to which non-Hindus are allowed to go even with their shoes on. Can injustice go any further?

The movement has so far been confined to attempts to abolish galling distinctions between the untouchables and those higher in the social scale—the caste Hindus as they are often called—and there seems to be no corresponding movement of untouchables to abolish the same kind of distinctions among themselves. Though frequently called outcastes, they are divided into numerous mutually exclusive castes which observe rules of untouchability; and they show no signs of applying the doctrine of equality in their own relations towards those whom they regard as their inferiors. This was frankly and publicly pointed out to them by the President of the All-Cochin Rural Congress in an address which he delivered to a conference of Pulayas (an untouchable caste) in 1939:

'While caste Hindus are gradually narrowing the gulf in their dealings with the depressed classes, the same kind of charity has yet to begin as between the superior and inferior sections among the depressed classes themselves. The caste Hindus had been the targets of unsparing criticism for the social inequalities and disabilities of the "depressed" classes. But, none the less, there was the important fact, studiously hidden from the public, that the very social evils against which the depressed classes had chafed were rampant among the depressed classes themselves, for they were observing untouchability and even unapproachability in their relations with those below them in the social scale.'

They might therefore, he continued, be held to be estopped from demanding the abolition of the custom which segregated them from the caste Hindus; and it was their bounden duty to start from the bottom and in the first place abolish inequality in their own community.

We may turn to the joint-family, which was at once an economic, a religious, and a social group. It was a corporate body, resembling a joint-stock company, with a property held in common. Sons became co-owners on and by virtue of birth,<sup>1</sup> so that the actual share to which each member was entitled was inconstant, diminishing or increasing with each birth or death in a family. All

<sup>1</sup> This is the general rule, but in Bengal the father owns the property and the sons do not become co-owners until his death, when they may either take their respective shares or, if they so desire, hold the property jointly.

were entitled to be maintained from the family funds according to their needs and were bound to contribute to them according to their abilities. It was distinguished from a merely secular group by common worship of a tutelary deity and by common ceremonial observances. Lastly, it was held together by obedience to the authority of the head of the family, generally the eldest male in the eldest line of male descent, who was responsible for the management of the joint property and for the prevention of anti-social conduct by its members, i.e. conduct which infringed caste rules or was opposed to the interests of the family or derogated from its prestige and sense of honour and morality. He thus combined the functions of the managing director of a joint-stock company and those of a *censor morum*.

The continuance of the joint family depended on the consent of its members. '*Nemo in communione potest invitus detineri* has always been a maxim of the Hindu family law.'<sup>1</sup> The right of partition was, however, sparingly exercised, and it was common for a family to consist of three or four generations, comprising, say, a grandfather, father, brothers, sons, uncles, nephews and cousins with their dependants, i.e. their wives and daughters, all living in the same house, and having common meals, common worship, and the enjoyment of a common property. A family of this type, constituting a kind of domestic commune, is unknown in Great Britain, but there are parallels elsewhere. In its social aspects it resembled the French provincial family,<sup>2</sup> and in its property relations the old Russian peasant family. The latter was almost a counterpart of the Indian joint family. It held land and cattle in common; the produce was the result of common labour and was considered a common property. It was entitled to demand from its members work for the common good; gains which any of them might make by outside work went into the common stock, and if a son went away from home, he was still expected to contribute to the expenses of the family.<sup>3</sup>

Eighty years ago families continuing undivided and having all things in common for several generations were the rule and individual property the exception. In 1861 it was noticed that, however divisible the possessions of a Hindu family might be theoretically, they were in fact so rarely distributed that many generations

<sup>1</sup> Sir W. Markby, *Introduction to Hindu and Mahomedan Law* (1896), p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> 'The family is the kernel of the body politic. The Latin Frenchman lives primarily in and for his family. The last does not consist merely of his wife and children; it is the regular thing in the provinces, and very common even in Paris, for grandparents, parents, and children all to live together, forming a whole tribe, which is generally ruled over by the senior grandfather.' Cohen Portheim, *The Spirit of France* (1933), p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> V. Stepniak, *The Russian Peasantry* (1905), p. 279.



constantly succeeded each other without a partition taking place.<sup>1</sup> Twenty years later fissiparous tendencies were seen in operation. Partition had become very frequent, and a family which had lasted for more than two generations was said to be rare. 'The archaic principle of the joint family', it was stated, 'is fast decaying'.<sup>2</sup> The process of disintegration has gone on steadily and without check since then, and it is becoming increasingly common for families to be dissolved into their component parts on the death of a father, when the property is divided, the sons taking the shares to which they are entitled and setting up separate establishments.

Among the lower castes separation takes place even during a father's lifetime largely on account of limited house accommodation, as, for instance, when the family dwelling-place has only one room. In such cases the sons set up for themselves as soon as they have wives and children, the father allotting to them the shares which they would be entitled to receive on his death. Among the upper classes partition during the lifetime of a father is still exceptional. So long as he is alive, the sons are as a rule content to live with him, to acknowledge his authority, and to contribute their earnings to the family funds which he administers. They do not expect to have a private purse unless they have received a modern education and are imbued with western ideas of individual rights. When, however, he dies, it is becoming increasingly rare for the sons to recognize either an uncle or an elder brother as the head of the family, and each goes his own way. This does not involve the abandonment of the joint-family system, for when the sons take their separate shares, their own sons become co-owners with them; but it does mean the substitution of small families, consisting of parents and children only, for large families subject to the control of the elder member. The partition may be only partial. The property may continue to be held jointly with a common manager, but the family itself is split up into different families which live separately and divide among themselves the income derived from the joint stock. They may, as a matter of convenience, continue to live in the ancestral home, especially if, as is often the case in rural areas, it consists not of a single building but of detached buildings; the different families living in them are, however, as separate as the tenants of flats or tenements. They may also arrange for common worship of the family deity and join together on ceremonial occasions, but this is the only vestige of a united life, and the social solidarity of the family, discharging inherited obligations under the control of its head, is destroyed.

<sup>1</sup> H. S. Maine, *Ancient Laws* (1891), pp. 228, 261-2. The first edition of this work was published in 1861.

<sup>2</sup> *Calcutta Review*, vol. lxxiii (1881), pp. 114, 115.

Disintegration is due to a combination of causes, chief of which is the change in economic conditions. The joint-family is an institution which had its origin in an earlier order of society, when the country was thinly peopled, the population was mainly agrarian, and cultivation was capable of expansion to meet the needs of growing families. Each family depended on its own labour and the larger it was, the greater was the number of hands available for work. It was an institution which was peculiarly dependent on a community of interests. The conditions favourable to it were those of a static society, in which the members of a family lived in the same place and followed the same pursuits from generation to generation. The economic complex has been transformed during the last hundred years. A largely increased population has caused pressure on the soil, which is acute in congested areas, where all the cultivable land has been brought under the plough and holdings are incapable of expansion. There is no longer the same uniformity of interests owing to the small size of holdings and the pressure of circumstances necessitating the adoption of different callings; one son, for example, may be an agriculturist, another a mechanic, a third a clerk. The extension of communications has facilitated migration, which may be periodic or permanent. Among the agricultural classes it is still mostly periodic, i.e. the able-bodied leave their homes for a time in order to find work elsewhere, and then return, in the meantime remitting what they can save from their earnings to eke out the family income; but among the professional and industrial classes it tends to be permanent. Those who have work away from their homes settle down with their wives and children in the place of their employment and partition of the family property is a natural consequence.

Another factor which has been increasingly powerful in modern times is psychological, viz. the growth of an individualistic spirit opposed to the collectivist or communal principle, which is the foundation stone of the joint-family system. This is not altogether a modern development in Bengal, where the coparcenary relationship of father and son had ceased to exist, and the idea of separate ownership by the father had been established, in the fifteenth or sixteenth century. A father had a right to dispose of his property during his lifetime and this was extended to disposing of it after death by means of wills, a practice which was probably copied originally from the Muslims, to whom the will was a well-known document. After the establishment of British rule the power of testamentary provision was more and more resorted to. It was discouraged by the courts and actually prohibited by statute in Madras; but it was established *suo motu* by the Hindus themselves. Eventually popular usage was endorsed by law, the custom of



will-making being recognized and regulated by an Act passed in 1870, which embodied the English law on the subject of wills. The process of change was advanced by this Act, but still more by a general tendency towards individualism. This was apparent as long ago as 1881, when it was said: 'The time is one of transition, and whenever favourable opportunities occur, the members of a joint-family put forth claims to deal independently with their joint shares, and if successful, they disconnect themselves from the parent stock and demand a partition.'<sup>1</sup>

The disruptive influences inherent in the spirit of individualism are not due solely to western influences, direct or derivative, but also to other factors, some of which may be regarded as constant, e.g. friction between different members of families with different temperaments, the trouble caused by the work-shy, quarrels among women, mismanagement of property by the head of the family, his inability to control those under him, &c. It is now the fashion in India to idealize the conditions of joint-family life, but older Hindu writers are eloquent on the subject of the difficulty of adjusting the conflicting interests of members and the frequent clashes to which the system lent itself.<sup>2</sup> In addition to these constant factors, new and disturbing influences have been at work owing to the intrusion of western ideas and manners, discordant with Indian customs and ideals, which have divided many a house against itself. Different members of families have a different outlook on religious, social, and educational questions. Some wish to retain the traditional Hindu mode of life, others to live in European fashion. Some cling to Hindu ritual and caste customs, others discard them. Clashes are due to different levels of education: a young bride, for example, who has received an English education, chafes at the domination of an uneducated mother-in-law who has lived in purdah all her life. Some again wish their daughters to have a European education and to postpone their marriage till they are of adult age, and these are ideas which are anathema to an older generation.

<sup>1</sup> *Calcutta Review*, vol. lxxiii (1881), p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> In *A Civilization at Bay* (Madras, 1931) Dr. K. Kunhikannan writes of the joint-family as ennobling, elevating, and spiritualizing the people, creating an atmosphere of contentment and peace, and enabling them to live in mutual accord and harmony. A very different picture was painted by Shib Chunder Bose in *The Hindoos as they are* (1883): 'The millennium is not yet come. Seven brothers living together, with their wives and children, under one and the same paternal roof cannot reasonably be expected to abide in a state of perfect harmony so long as selfishness and incongruous tastes and interests are continually at work to sap the foundations of friendliness and good fellowship. . . . On careful inquiry it will be found that women are at the bottom of that mischievous discord which eats into the very vitals of domestic felicity. Separation therefore is the only means that promises to afford relief from this social incubus; and to separation many families have now resorted.'

The old form of family seems to be gradually passing away with a consequent enlargement of individual rights but at the same time a weakening of the sense of family obligation. The main motive force appears to be a preference for individual interests, combined with a disinclination to submit to the patriarchal authority of any relative except a father, in whose case there is the constraining force of filial duty. Inequality of earning capacity due to the variety of careers which are open under modern conditions is a fruitful source of discord; the well-paid man feels that he contributes more than a fair share towards the common expenses and is not unnaturally filled with a sense of grievance against his less prosperous brethren. The right to have a separate income is asserted, and there is not the same readiness to pool individual earnings. A limited right to self-acquired property was always recognized; it was confined to gains made by a man's personal efforts without the use of family funds or the assistance of other members of the family. More and more advantage is taken of this provision of Hindu law to claim property as self-acquired, the effects of private efforts being magnified and the part played by family funds being minimized.

The joint-family is now no longer regarded as an inviolable institution. Not only may it be abandoned at any time by consent but it can also be modified by legislative enactment. Two measures have already been passed which run counter to its established principles. One is the Gains of Learning Act of 1930, which weakens the collectivist basis of the system by providing that an individual member has a separate right to property acquired by means of an education which has been paid for out of family funds, e.g. a specialized education in law, medicine, and engineering; such 'gains of learning' were formerly treated as joint property. The other is of a more revolutionary character, for it allows a daughter's son or a sister's son to succeed to family property. This is a concession to modern ideas of western origin, and it cuts at the root of the pre-existing system, which admitted only of succession in the male line.<sup>1</sup>

In conclusion, the changes which have taken place in the composition and functions of the village community may be referred to. In Bengal this had ceased to exist as a living and active social organism before the British came into power, but elsewhere it maintained its vitality as an autonomous body, which was also economically self-sufficient. The combination of autonomous authority and economic autarchy led early British administrators,

<sup>1</sup> There is an exception to this general rule in Malabar, where succession is matrilineal, the joint-family consisting of descendants of a woman in the female line.



to whom such a system was novel, to describe the village communities as republics or little states. The whole of India, it was said, was nothing more than a congeries of such republics; the villages contained in miniature all the materials of a state. Similar language has been used of village communities in other parts of the world. The *mir*s or village communes of Russia were described by Stepniak in words resembling those of Elphinstone and Metcalfe, as self-governing, semi-republican bodies, each of which was a microcosm, a small world of its own. There is an even closer parallel in China, which a Chinese scholar has described as

'a huge republic within which are myriads of petty republics. For the village in China is an autonomous unit. Nominally it is governed by a central government through a hierarchical series of officials. But actually, with the exception of paying a nominal land-tax and in a few other cases, the village is as independent of the central government as any British self-governing colony is independent of the imperial government. The village in China is less governed than any other in the world. The central government plays but an infinitesimal part in the village life. The village has perfect freedom of industry and trade, of religion, and of everything that concerns the government, regulation, and protection of the locality.'

There was a similar absence of government control in India in the pre-British period. Both Hindu and Muslim rulers left the villages very much to themselves provided that they kept the peace and paid the land revenue to which they were assessed. The tentacles of British administration, however, brought them within their grip. Communal independence was sacrificed to the interests of efficiency, village administration was brought under supervision and control, and village officials were treated as subordinate agents of the government.

Other influences which have contributed to the dissolution of the village community have been referred to elsewhere and need therefore only be summarized here. Its constitution was affected by the administrative system, which recognized individual responsibility for land revenue in place of joint responsibility, while the creation of private rights in land and facilities for its sale and transfer led to the introduction of outsiders. Economic equilibrium was disturbed by increased intercourse with the towns and the development of outside industries competing for labour. The village handicraftsmen and menials, instead of working for the village as a whole, acquired the right of private contract with individual employers, and their wages were raised by competition. These were no longer fixed entirely by custom but to an increasing extent by the law of supply and demand, though the customary

<sup>1</sup> Y. K. Leong and L. K. Tao, *Village and Town Life in China* (1923), p. 5.

remuneration by means of assignments of land and shares of the crops has by no means disappeared. The change has been all to the good of the village menials, who had little liberty of life and action so long as they were the servants of every man.<sup>1</sup> Their remuneration being generally a mere pittance, they lived on a subsistence level; and the system meant for them simply the standardization of low wages and indifferent conditions. So complete was the decay in British India of the old system under which the village community was a self-governing institution that in 1909 a special commission of inquiry, known as the Decentralization Commission, came to the conclusion that it would be impossible, even if it were expedient, to restore it. A certain measure of corporate life, however, still survived, which it was hoped might be developed, and it therefore recommended the establishment of village councils, with certain administrative powers for the management of village affairs, under the time-honoured name of *panchayats*. Its recommendations have been given effect to in several provinces, but the new bodies, of which some 10,000 to 12,000 have been formed, are artificial organizations and not a spontaneous growth. Though capable of, and in many cases doing, useful work, they seem to lack the organic unity which was inherent in the village community.

In the States, however, the village community retains its vitality. According to a recent account, it has remained comparatively untouched by modern social and political changes; as found in Rajputana, it is described, in words reminiscent of those used a century ago, as 'a republic in miniature with a decided oligarchic tinge'. There, it is said, the villagers are treated with respect and with a certain punctiliousness by the State authorities, and they maintain a sturdy independence, resisting any infringement of their traditional rights. The hereditary head-men and the village councils levy taxes for public and charitable purposes, such as the maintenance of rights-of-way and boundary marks, the upkeep of temples, and the entertainment of wandering *sadhus* and indigent strangers. They maintain peace and good order, and they settle disputes within their villages without recourse to the courts of law and, in so doing, have the support of the State authorities.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. W. Crooke states that in the United Provinces they were little better than serfs at the mercy of the lenders of the village body. 'There is no class of the people on whom British rule has worked a more radical change.' *The North-Western Provinces* (1897), p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> *Social Service in India* (1939), pp. 80-3.



## CHAPTER XI

### MUSLIM CULTURE AND RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

IN considering the interactions of the civilizations of India and the West, especially on the religious side, it should be borne in mind that the Indian Muslims stand on a somewhat different footing from their Hindu fellow-citizens. The differences are due partly to historical causes, partly to the sociological structure of the Muslim community, and partly to a difference in the nature of their religious ideals. The historical causes as they affect Islam generally are of world-wide significance. Islam is a world religion. From its origin it has been in intimate contact with Christianity and Judaism. Its contact with Greek and Roman ideas has been constant. Its earliest exponents clothed their systematic expositions in methods developed in the defunct schools of Alexandria and in the cosmopolitan philosophies which they borrowed. In the age of Charlemagne the more characteristic ideas of the modern West were enshrined in Arabic works, and the practical arts and sciences were cultivated by the Muslims. Cordova in Spain and Palermo in Sicily were centres at which the West met and commingled with the Islamic East. The medical school of Salerno in Italy, to which may be traced the germ of the university system of Europe, looked back traditionally to four masters as its founders—a Greek, a Latin, a Jew, and a Saracen. In politics, in commerce, in navigation, and in the warlike enterprises of the Crusades, there were intercourse and interactions, conflicts and borrowings, which left their marks deep on the history both of Islam and of Europe. The *Ilm ul Kalam* of Islam and the medieval theology of the schoolmen of Christianity, the Neoplatonists and the Sufis, show subtle interrelations, sometimes direct and sometimes unconscious, which indicate how religious influences acted as between East and West.

In India Islam was subject to certain special influences. The Muslims, coming as conquerors, consciously borrowed little from India itself, though learned men, like Albiruni, studied deeply Hindu sciences, Hindu philosophies, and Hindu ethics. But they could not help being indirectly affected by their environment, and the bulk of the Indian Muslims, who came into Islam by conversion, brought with them their ethnic heritage in the form of customs, domestic traditions, ingrained ideas of social schemes like the joint-family system, and certain customs relating to marriage, inheritance, and priestly ceremonies. On the other hand,

the Arabs, Persians, Turks, and other Muslims of non-Indian stock brought with them their inherited instincts and ideas, which included ways of thought and life cast in a more western mould.

Even on the soil of India itself the Muslims were not as isolated as the Hindus from the rest of the world. A constant stream of Persians, Afghans, and Turks was attracted to India all the time that the Muslims held sway there. When Vasco da Gama landed at Calicut, on 20 May, 1498, a messenger whom he sent ashore was met, and accosted in Spanish, by a Moorish Muslim merchant from Tangier (or Tunis), who introduced the Portuguese to the Zamorin's Court and acted as an intermediary between the Portuguese, who knew no Indian language, and the people of Malabar, who knew no western language.<sup>1</sup> Vasco da Gama's pilot from the east coast of Africa to the west coast of southern India was an Arab. Arab commerce and shipping had been till then predominant in the Indian Ocean, and there was a considerable Arab colony in southern India.

The Muslims have been particularly susceptible to outside influences on account of their sociological structure. However great the pull exerted by local factors, they have on the whole resisted any tendency to racialism. The absence of a feeling of racialism prepared the Muslim mind freely to receive impressions and influences from outside. 'Seek knowledge', said the Prophet, 'even though as far as China.' This principle has gone a long way towards the formation of the religious ideals of Islam, which have always tended towards cosmopolitanism. And religious ideals with Muslims include social and intellectual ideals. An interesting instance of this spirit of receptivity is mentioned by the French traveller Bernier, who visited India from 1659 to 1667. He held a salaried post as physician in the Court of Aurangzeb and a similar position with Danishmand Khan, who was Governor of Delhi and directed the affairs of the Mughal foreign department. Bernier was a philosopher and had been a disciple of Gassendi. He was a welcome exponent to his Agha of the philosophy of Descartes (1596-1650), which rejected scholastic theology and opened a new horizon by the use of the recent discoveries in experimental science. Danishmand Khan was eager to learn about Harvey's theory of the circulation of the blood and Pecquet's explanation of the conversion of chyle into blood, and got Bernier to translate for him into Persian the works of Gassendi and Descartes.<sup>2</sup>

The wide horizon created by historical, sociological, and religious influences was, however, narrowed for the Indian Muslims

<sup>1</sup> See the graphic picture of this incident drawn in the seventh book of the *Lusiad*, which here closely adheres to historical facts.

<sup>2</sup> *Bernier's Travels*, ed. Constable and V. A. Smith (1914), p. 324.



by other causes which operated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In their conquest of India a handful of foreign origin, drawn from the most vigorous races of Islam, had been reinforced by Indian elements. These latter were numerically strong and their psychological heritage very considerably modified the practical working of Islam among them. There had been mass conversions, especially in Kashmir and in eastern Bengal, mainly at the bottom of the social scale. In Islam the converts found a status of equality, but their minds still ran in the old grooves. Muslim saints were worshipped almost like Hindu gods and god-lings. The Prophet and (among some Shias) Hazrat Ali were raised almost to divine rank. The Buddhist worship of relics insidiously crept into Islam. Religious processions and Muharram celebrations began to partake of the character of *rath jattras* (Hindu car festivals). The mystic teachers known as *pirs*, ascetics, and holy men began almost to create a priesthood and a hereditary sacred caste. Necromancy and a belief in omens and magic gained ground, in spite of the Koranic protest against them. Pure monotheism and the moral fervour of a society based on social equality began in practice to recede into the background.

These tendencies were much strengthened with the decline of Muslim power in India, because (a) the recruitment of the Indian Muslim community from brother Muslims outside India ceased; (b) the higher classes of Muslims began to sink into poverty and to be submerged in the lower social strata; (c) Muslim education began to contract both in quantity and quality; (d) learned men began to connive at popular practices, and, as the lamp of their learning began to burn less brightly, were themselves caught in the mesh of the influences that surrounded them; and (e) the loss of political power to the British made the former Indo-Muslim governing classes bitter against the British and against the western civilization which they represented.

The result was that the intellectual and religious leadership of Muslim India fell from its early standards. A people who might have been expected from their antecedents to be most favourable to the new civilization became bitterly and implacably hostile to it. Politics and economics reacted on ethics and religion. And it must be confessed that there was much in the British attitude, conscious and unconscious, that fanned this hostility. To cite one instance, the Marquess Wellesley, in writing to the Secret Committee of the Company's Court of Directors on 28 September 1801, used these words:<sup>1</sup> 'It is not consistent with the dignity of the British Government to employ any native of this country as its

<sup>1</sup> *Despatches &c. of the Marquess Wellesley*, ed. M. Martin (1836), vol. II, p. 580.

representative at a foreign court, nor could the British interest be with any degree of safety confided to any person of that description.' Many of the finer and more skilled industrial arts of India had been in the hands of Muslims, and they were ruined by the fiscal policy of the East India Company. The higher posts in pre-British India, in the army, in the administration, and in the learned professions, had been in Muslim hands. Many of the higher and middle classes were reduced to beggary and joined Pindari bands and seditious movements aimed at the British power. The Christian missionaries found no field for their propaganda among the Muslims, and their main influence, direct and indirect, was exerted on the Hindu mind. Hence we find such progressive movements as that of Raja Ram Mohan Ray among the Hindus, but they had no counterpart among the Muslims. On the other hand we have the Faraidhi and the Wahhabi movements of the early nineteenth century, which were hostile to the British, politically and culturally, and caused great searchings of heart in Muslim circles. Other movements, too, aimed at reform, but, as we shall see, their inspiration was not western until we come to the days of Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan.

A glimpse into the Indian Muslim mind of the end of the eighteenth century is afforded in the book of travels written in Persian by Mirza Abu Talib Khan, of Oudh and Bengal, who travelled in England, Europe, Asia, and Africa, in 1793-6.<sup>1</sup> He praises many good qualities in the English people, but he condemns three features: their want of religion, their luxurious living, and their contempt for other nations. He had in his mind of course not only what he saw in his travels, but also his experiences in contemporary India. He was not peculiar in his views. Thousands of his co-religionists in India would have slurred over the virtues which he praised, and merely pointed to the vices which he condemned. Their general mental attitude was one of opposition to the West and little was done to effect a *rapprochement*. The Calcutta Madrasa founded by Warren Hastings (1781) and Fort William College, which the Marquess Wellesley, in 1800, established in Calcutta for the training of British civil servants, did, however, gather a few learned Muslims together at the capital of India and had some slight influence on Muslim cultural development. The casting of type and the printing of Indian writings by movable type was also a contribution to cultural progress. Charles Wilkins, a 'writer' in the Bengal Service, was the first to caste types in the Bengali and Persian characters. Urdu uses the Persian character,

<sup>1</sup> An English translation was published by Charles Stewart, 2 vols. (London, 1810). Quotations will be found in my *Angrezi 'ahd men Hindustan ke tamaddun ki tarikh* (Allahabad, 1936), pp. 131-4.



and it is noticeable that the so-called Wahhabi literature, to be mentioned presently, was type-printed;<sup>1</sup> and it is probable that the type it used derived its origin from Wilkins's type. Neither Urdu nor Persian type-printing has caught on in India, much to the misfortune of the Indian Muslims. They are still content in the main with lithographic printing. Had the first type been cast, not in imitation of calligraphic writing, in which the letters change shapes and merge into each other, but in distinct unchanging shapes, Urdu type-printing and the evolution of modern Indo-Muslim culture might have had a different and more favourable history.

We have tried to analyse the causes of the hostility of the Indo-Muslim mind to British education and British culture at the beginning of British rule in India. Let us now consider some of its consequences. There is no doubt that the Muslim mind at the beginning of the nineteenth century entertained the deepest suspicion of the British, who had destroyed their power, and of western culture, which was in their mind associated with the British. The hatred of Tipu Sultan to the British is well known. It induced him to accept the French Revolution, call himself 'Citoyen Tipu', and correspond with the Directory in France. It cost him his throne and his life. The Nawabs of the Carnatic, though nominally friendly to the British, sympathized with Tipu, and their State was annexed in 1801. About the same time the British relations with the Nawab-Wazir of Oudh were not happy; and all the resources of British diplomacy were required to suppress the anti-British party that raised its head again and again in the Court of the Nizam of Hyderabad. The feelings of suspicion and distrust which prevailed in such fragments of Muslim power as remained drifted across to British territory. British rule was still new, and none of the agencies to explain the higher side of British culture and British character had yet taken root in the country. Such as there were, were gladly used by the Hindus. Government by non-Hindus was nothing new to them and, in spite of their caste exclusiveness, the new commercial régime opened out to them avenues of employment and gain. They readily took to the language of their new rulers—as readily as they had taken to Persian, the official language of the Muslim rulers. The Hindu College in Calcutta (now Presidency College), which was founded in 1816, disseminated English knowledge among the Hindus and made their reform movements (and even to some extent their reactionary movements) follow western lines in a manner which was then impossible for the Muslims.

There were four reform or reactionary movements in Indian

<sup>1</sup> *Angrezi 'Ahd*, chapter 2.

Islam which we may now consider in some detail. They have often been confused by English writers on account of their contact at certain points and because they seemed in a way all directed towards resisting the onrush of western ideas. But when they are examined they will be found to have originated in different circumstances, to have been fostered by men of very different characters, and to have left their mark in quite different degrees on Indian Islam. These four movements we shall group under the names of their four respective leaders, Shah Abdul Aziz of Delhi, Saiyid Ahmad of Bareilly, Shaikh Karamat Ali of Jaunpur, and Haji Shariat-ullah of Faridpur. I have named Shah Abdul Aziz first, as I consider that his influence has been the most lasting of all and persists to the present day. Doctrinally, it inspired at least two of the other movements, though the practical shape they took was outside the scope of Shah Abdul Aziz's school of thought.

Shah Abdul Aziz taught the need for reforming Islam in India by purging it of superstitious practices which it had borrowed from Hinduism and restoring the creed of early Islam as taught by the Prophet. His disciples and followers started puritan movements, which may be called 'Back to the Quran' movements', as their object was to make the Quran take its proper place as the foundation of belief and guide of conduct. A militant propaganda was set on foot by Saiyid Ahmad, who proclaimed that India, being under non-Muslim powers, was a *dar ul harb* or war zone, in which a *jihad*, or holy war, should be waged against unbelievers. He and Muhammad Ismail took for their field of action not British India, where there was religious toleration, but the then non-British Punjab, where Muslims were oppressed and persecuted by the Sikhs. They made their base in the Swat Valley, where from 1824 to 1831 they kept up a militant campaign against the Sikhs, capturing Peshawar itself in 1830. They brought a large number of their followers from India, but the backbone of their fighting strength was the sturdy Afghan. Valour and enthusiasm, however, availed them nothing against the disciplined armies and European equipment of Ranjit Singh, and they fell fighting at Balakot in 1831. The movement continued for some years, with its headquarters at Sittana on the Swat frontier, and after the British annexation of the Punjab it became anti-British. But it became a mere frontier political movement and has no further interest for us in this connexion.

The movement led by Sheikh Karamat Ali, who was born at Jaunpur early in the nineteenth century and was also a disciple of Shah Abdul Aziz of Delhi, had a wholly peaceful and religious aim. He was able to bring a large number of ignorant Muslims to

<sup>1</sup> Anglice Koran.



abandon the extreme doctrines by which they were being led into dangerous paths of political irredentism. One of these doctrines was that as India was no longer a Muslim country, the Muslims should consider themselves as in a war zone (*dar ul harb*), in which the celebration of the congregational Friday prayer and the celebration of the two joyful festivals of *Id* were unlawful. He taught that on account of the prevalence of complete religious liberty India was not a *dar ul harb*, and that the celebration of the Friday congregational prayer and of the two *Id* festivals was not only lawful but obligatory. He did much to stabilize Muslim opinion in Bengal, and indirectly facilitated the movements which brought the Indian Muslims again into the circle of western education and western ideas.<sup>1</sup>

The most popular movement which Karamat Ali's school had to contend with was the Faraidhi (pronounced in India *Faraiizi*) movement of eastern Bengal. This was partly religious and partly agrarian. It was founded by Haji Shariat-ullah of Faridpur. He performed the Mecca pilgrimage in 1802, at a time when the Wahhabi ferment was beginning to show itself, but he himself belonged to the Shafii school. On his return to Bengal he began to preach purity of faith and conduct, and obtained a large following among the peasantry. He declared the country to be a *dar ul harb*. Therefore, he argued, Friday congregational prayers and the celebration of the two *Id* festivals were unlawful, and Muslims should exert themselves to bring about normal conditions in which they could exercise these important rites of their religion. The tenantry of Eastern Bengal were mostly Muslims, whom the exactions of their Hindu landlords had reduced to great poverty, and the propaganda was as much agrarian as religious. Under Shariat-ullah's son, Dudhu Miyan (Muhammad Mohsin), the Faraidhi organization was further tightened up, and a sort of *Jacquerie* movement, with a no-rent campaign and a regular fund, was set in full working order. This resulted in riots in 1838, but the peasantry were well-protected by their boycott of British courts, the absence of witnesses making legal process impracticable. The religious side of the movement slowly toned down, and it has nearly lost its force with advancing education. But other forces, and from other parts of India, have since brought the eastern Bengal Muslims into the circle of modern western ideas, especially since the foundation of the Dacca University in 1921.

Puritan movements in India are loosely spoken of as Wahhabi. In official literature the frontier movement and the seditious movements of the 1860's are so labelled, as well as Shaikh Karamat Ali's movement and that of the Faraidhis. But this is without

<sup>1</sup> See my article on Karamat Ali in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

warrant. None of them was organically connected with the movement started in Arabia by Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab (1707-87), which sought its inspiration from Imam ibn Taimiya of the Hanbali school of Muslim theology, was literalist and puritanical in tendency, and had for its chief practical aim the abolition of tribalism in Arabia. Many of the Indian movements followed the Hanafi and the Shafii schools and expressly disclaimed or even criticized or attacked the Wahhabi rejection of *Tasawwuf* or orthodox Sufi philosophy, though they sympathized with the reform which seeks the abolition of extraneous customs and forms and rites. Perhaps the only Indian school of thought which may legitimately be called Wahhabi is that known as the Ahl-i-Hadith. This, however, has no importance either numerically or doctrinally, and its main general principle, that nothing should have authority in Islam except the Quran and the Hadith traditions, is practically universally accepted in theory by all schools.<sup>1</sup>

We have hitherto spoken of the negative side of our inquiry, of the resistance to western civilization rather than receptivity of its influences, salutary or otherwise. But the resistance may itself be considered one of the factors due to the circumstances in which western influences had impinged on Muslim institutions and Muslim thought in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in India. Owing to loss of power and dignity, loss of honourable employment and the comforts of material life, owing to poverty and injured pride, there was a degradation in Muslim standards, which prevented curative forces from coming into operation, as they did later. In British India this continued till after the Mutiny. But there were favoured spots like Oudh, where the Muslim court, raised to the dignity of a royal court by the Marquess Hastings, was the focus of a very active convergence of influences. It is true that there was much evil as well as much good introduced on both sides. The private life of some of the Oudh kings may not bear strict investigation, but we are concerned more with general influences than with particular lives, and there is no doubt that there was in Lucknow a general 'European Mania',<sup>2</sup> as an anonymous writer calls it, in the reign of King Nasir-ud-din Haidar (1827-37). Even now, after the lapse of a century, the appearance of Lucknow, with its spacious undulating parks, its Italian statuary, and the Martinière recalling memories of General Claude Martin, the French soldier of fortune, speaks of an early

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Hunter's account in his 'Indian Musalmans' (1872), is, of course, accurate as regards the facts elicited from official documents and state trials for treason, but as regards doctrinal discussions it is an unconscious travesty. Unfortunately it has been followed in some articles in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

<sup>2</sup> *Private Life of an Eastern King* (1855), by a Member of the Household (ed. W. Knighton), p. 113.



Europeanization that extended from outward things to inner thought and current literature.

Bishop Heber visited Lucknow in 1824 in the reign of Ghazi-ud-din Haider and has recorded his impressions in his *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India*. He found the appearance of Lucknow more like 'some of the smaller European capitals (Dresden for instance) than anything I have seen in India'. He spoke of 'a very handsome street indeed, wider than the High Street at Oxford, but having some distant resemblance to it in the colour of its buildings, and the general form and Gothic style of the greater part of them'. Speaking of a wedding breakfast at the Residency, at which the king of Oudh was present, he gives a glimpse of the mind of the king.

'At this breakfast he was more communicative than he had been, talked about steam-engines, and a new way of propelling ships by a spiral wheel at the bottom of the vessel, which an English engineer in his pay had invented, mentioned different circumstances respecting the earthquake at Shiraz which had been reported to him, but were not named in the Calcutta newspapers, and explained the degree of acquaintance which he showed with English books by saying he made his aides-de-camp read them to him in Hindoostance.'

Bishop Heber tells in another place that the king had 'a strong taste for mechanics and chemistry', and retained a good English painter, whose son was his equerry and European aide-de-camp. His successor, Nasir-ud-din Haider (1827-37), inherited his scientific and artistic tastes and often wore European dress and a European hat. He built an observatory, which was in the charge of an English Astronomer-Royal, a Colonel Wilcox, and he had a German painter and musician in his entourage; the royal palace was full of good pictures, including portraits by Zoffany.<sup>1</sup> Altogether the atmosphere of the Lucknow court was brilliant and cosmopolitan.

These external influences were reflected in literature. The Urdu literature of the best Lucknow period is full of joy and pride. New ideas took root and new methods were adopted, which made original contributions to it, though it would be far-fetched to suggest that all this was due directly to western influences. The fine development of *marthiya* (or *marsiya*) poetry under Anis and Dabir went far to introduce an epic element into Urdu literature.<sup>2</sup> The new impulse given to Urdu drama with plays like the *Indar Sabha* of Amanat almost gave a glimpse of European opera to the

<sup>1</sup> See *Private Life of an Eastern King*, pp. 13, 253.

<sup>2</sup> See my remarks on this subject in chapter 7 of *Angrezi 'Ahad*. The *Marthiya* is a specialized form of literature describing the tragic events of Muharram and the martyrdom of Imam Husain.

Urdu-speaking public.<sup>1</sup> Wajid Ali Shah, the last king of Oudh, was full of ideas on art and literature, and his court attracted a galaxy of foreign artists. He had a press where books in Urdu and Persian were printed with movable types; he maintained a museum; and his library contained not less than 200,000 rare books and manuscripts.<sup>2</sup> With the end of the Oudh kingdom in 1856 was extinguished the last bright spot of Muslim cultural development on the old lines as modified by the new civilization from the West.

The tragedy of the great revolt in 1857-8 marks the death of the old order, and brought political, economic, and cultural disaster to the Indian Muslims. It made their sullenness, their aloofness, their suppressed hatred for the new order more marked than ever. For many years afterwards the Muslims steadily lost ground in education, in the public services, and in general leadership in India. But no great community can commit suicide in that way. The key to the whole situation was adaptation to the new environment, use of the new forces that had come into play, acceptance of the new instrument of progress that had been created through English education. Sporadic efforts were made in this direction in many places, but the concentrated effort that won the field was the Aligarh movement and the All-India Muslim Educational Conference. The Aligarh movement is so called after the college, the opening of which in 1875 as the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College forms a landmark in the history of Indian Muslim education. The movement is usually looked upon as an educational movement, but it was much more than that. It was a comprehensive reform movement. Its leader, the man who gave it life and soul, was undoubtedly Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan, but it attracted to its orbit some of the most brilliant contemporary Muslims of northern India, such as the poet Khwaja Altaf Husain Hali of Panipat (1837-1914), the novelist, lecturer, legislator, and educationist Maulvi Nazir Ahmad of Bijnor (1836-1912), and the professor, intrepid traveller, and researcher Maulvi Shibli Numani of Azamgarh (1857-1914), a younger man who for sixteen years (1882-98) taught at the college. These are only three of the greatest names on the Indian side, each of them representing a particular phase of the movement, and there was a vast army of support in all parts of India. On the English side, three names stand out and are household words in Aligarh: Mr. Theodore Beck, the first Principal of the college and the right-hand man of the founder in working out the administrative details and putting them into operation; Sir Theodore Morison, who continued to

<sup>1</sup> See 'The Modern Hindustani Drama' in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature*, vol. xxxv, 2nd series (1917).

<sup>2</sup> *Dacoits in excelsis, or the Spoliation of Oude*, p. 145.



interest himself in the college and the cause long after he had relinquished formal connexion with them; and Sir Thomas Arnold, the scholar and Arabist, who did so much to elucidate by his writings some of the less known features in the history and art of Islam.

Among the objects and ideals of the movement the first place should, I think, be assigned to the desire to make modern knowledge a living force among Muslims, as it was in their palmy days. It has been, and still is, the fashion among Indians to use rhetorical language about the discoveries, inventions, and progress of their ancestors. But rhetoric is not of much practical value, and may even make the community ridiculous and retard their actual progress. The Aligarh school aimed at the practical and fruitful method. The first step was to make the Muslim mind eager for the best modern knowledge in science and art, which is undoubtedly to be found in the West, and to dispel the false notion that it was in any way inconsistent with the Islamic religion. The next step, which was practically simultaneous—the one helped the other—was to use this knowledge in its practical applications to all departments of life and thought.

The Saiyid saw that the way to modern knowledge in India was through the English language, but he felt that English as a language of thought and an instrument of culture could only be the language of a select few in India. The main hope of Indian progress should lie in the presentation of modern ideas and facts through the Indian languages themselves. Persian was still used as the cultural language of upper-class Muslims all over India, but Urdu had wider scope and immensely greater possibilities for the masses. He therefore wrote largely in Urdu and encouraged the growth and cultivation of that language. He may himself be regarded as one of the precursors of a practical, modern, Urdu prose. He even drew up in 1867 a scheme for an Urdu university, which was submitted to government. It came to nothing then; but the idea has since found favour with the Hyderabad State, where His Exalted Highness the Nizam in 1919 established the Osmania University, in which all instruction is given in Urdu.

We now come to education. College education in India is subject to the curricula and the regulations of the university to which the college is affiliated. At the time when the Aligarh College was founded the colleges in the United Provinces were under affiliation to the distant University of Calcutta, as the Allahabad University was not incorporated till 1889. The Calcutta University originated and worked in a milieu totally different from any that suited the Muslims, but at any rate it granted degrees that brought employment in government services and in the learned professions, and

to that extent a college of any kind was helpful to the Muslims. But there were two defects which could be cured in a separate Muslim college even under the Calcutta University. Those defects were the lack of residential and social life and the lack of religious education.

It was from the beginning intended that at Aligarh there should be residential hostels or, as they were called, boarding-houses, and that a closely knit residential and social life should be provided, in which not only should the students learn self-discipline among themselves but have opportunities of meeting their professors in informal contacts. A number of Englishmen were intentionally chosen, and Mr. Beck, with his experience of the residential University of Cambridge and his honours as president of the Cambridge Union, proved an admirable choice, none the less admirable because he was appointed Principal of the college at the formative age of 24. The Debating Union of Aligarh became one of the foremost college debating societies in India. Manly English games were also encouraged; Aligarh cricket became famous through India and beyond. Aligarh College was in its conception meant to be a great public school, like the public schools of England, and was sometimes called the Eton of India. Common dining in hall was insisted on. All this was possible in a Muslim institution, because sports and games, common social life, and common meals were among the most rooted of Islamic traditions. For though Aligarh admitted non-Muslim students, its traditions and management were Islamic. These features were absent from the ordinary schools and colleges of India, of mixed composition, because caste and exclusive dining customs were observed among the Hindus and could not be broken without offence to the Hindu students.

Religious instruction was an element which was considered even more vital. The Muslims did not want godless and soulless education, such as ordinary education without religious instruction was apt to become. The State schools were bound to religious neutrality and by their very constitution barred religious education. The missionary institutions gave instruction in the tenets and principles of Christianity, which was unacceptable to Muslims. Instruction in the religion of Islam was what most Muslim parents earnestly desired. The crucial question was what was to be its precise nature. It was easy to provide that attendance at the college mosque was to be compulsory for Friday congregational prayers. But in a graded course of instruction in religious tenets certain difficulties presented themselves. The chief religious cleavage among the Muslims is that of Shias and Sunnis. Even here a common basis could have been found, and has been found



elsewhere. But Indian Islam had got into a narrow groove, and a new institution or movement could not afford to offend one side or another. India had not passed through a religious educational history such as has evolved the Cowper-Temple clause in England. It was decided that separate worship and separate religious instruction should be provided for Shias and Sunnis. Separate theological professors were appointed, and religious instruction was not, and has not yet been, distinguished from theology. The majority of the students belonged, and belong, to the Sunni persuasion. Though there is an occasional outburst of *odium theologicum*, there is on the whole mutual toleration of the four recognized orthodox schools of theological thought.

But what about modernism, or anything outside the pale of the four recognized schools? In Aligarh this presented a real difficulty. The founder of the college held views on the interpretation of the Quran which were not acceptable to the community generally. Some of his own lieutenants, staunch in support of his educational policy, dissented from his religious interpretations, based as they were on the right of private judgement, which challenged the accepted standards of authority in matters of doctrine and practice. These he had published in numerous papers and in his commentary on the Holy Book. Among the Maulvis, or recognized religious leaders, there were two classes of men. One consisted of the ordinary bazaar Maulvis, very ignorant outside the narrow circle of their religious knowledge, and as intolerant of new views as they were ignorant. The other consisted of really learned men, but men whose horizon was bounded by the theological writings of the Middle Ages of Islam and who looked upon the new learning with suspicion if not with positive horror.

These various hostile forces pronounced the Saiyid Saheb to be an unbeliever, or worse still, a *Kafir*, one who rejected the true religion. What then was to be done? Religious instruction could not be abandoned, or the funds that were necessary would not be forthcoming. Either English education was to be jeopardized by the preaching of religious views obnoxious to the community, or orthodox religious views were to be taught inconsistent with the promoter's views. The latter course was chosen, without bringing the matter to a definite issue. Religious instructors were appointed, to teach on the old lines, which did not really appeal to the students but which appealed to their parents and to the community generally. No definite lines were laid down. Committees were appointed from time to time to give greater definition to religious instruction, but their members often held opposite views, and even the compromise reports which they presented were mostly merely

recorded and then forgotten. To this day the nature of religious instruction remains undefined. And this is so, not only at Aligarh, but in other Muslim institutions.

The religious views propounded in Saiyid Ahmad Khan's commentary,<sup>1</sup> and supposed to be held by the Aligarh school, were dubbed *Nechari*, a word which was an importation from English, meaning that they followed Nature rather than Revelation. Those views, it is true, followed a rationalistic line of thought, but they lost sight of historical perspective, and were wanting in the devout fervour of the Sufi schools. They explained away miracles, but it would be a mistake to suppose that they followed the precept of the Stoic school of philosophy 'Follow Nature'. The Stoic practically eliminated God, and his wise man was either a materialist or a pantheist. If a label is to be applied at all to Saiyid Ahmad Khan's scheme of interpretation, it might possibly be called deistic. But it gave a prominent place to Revelation as the main source of religious knowledge, which the eighteenth century of English deism did not. In any case his views never crystallized into a system, or sect, or school, and in spite of personal attacks on him there was never a schism. This was fortunate. The religious views were almost forgotten in the educational effort with which the Aligarh school is identified.

With the testing of religious forms and customs by ethical standards and social behaviour are bound up questions of social reform and the development of sound popular literature. And it is in these matters that the interactions of the East and West appear to the best advantage and are most readily recognized. Aligarh did a great deal in both directions. It evolved a distinctive dress—a national dress if the Indian Muslims can be called a nation—viz. the Turkish cap for a head-dress, and the *sherwani*, or close-fitting coat, a compromise between the old loose *achkan* or *angarkha* and the short European coat. Boots and shoes of English leather or English fashion also came into vogue. It evolved a less formal code of manners and more business-like forms of address in correspondence. A higher material standard of living was adopted, with more modern forms of houses. Dinner parties, with the use of forks and knives, chairs and tables, tea parties, and 'At Homes' became fashionable. Customs deriving their origin from Hinduism, which were enforced in the case of Muslims by British courts of law, especially in the Punjab, came gradually to be disowned. These related mainly to questions of inheritance, in which Muslim law gave definite shares to women as well as men, while Hindu law excluded women. Certain Muslim families, which, on account of

<sup>1</sup> The commentary has been discussed by Khwaja Altaf Husain Hali in his life of Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan, *Hayat-i-Jawid* (Agra, 1903), Part II, pp. 165-94.



these legally enforceable customs, were handicapped in following the Muslim law, made statutory declarations, adopting the full provisions of the latter; and this principle has now been recognized in all-India legislation by the enactment of the Muslim Personal Law Application Act, 1937. The bar against the remarriage of widows, which was observed among the higher castes of Hindus, had been tacitly accepted in Muslim families of Hindu descent. Much literature was produced against it, and a public opinion was created which almost stamped out the objections to it. There was also opposition to plural marriages. They were condemned in Maulvi Nazir Ahmad's novel *Mubtala*, which is only one of a number of social novels which the Maulvi Saheb wrote with a purpose. In *Taubat un Nasuh* he dealt with social life and the moral questions involved from a man's point of view, and in *Mirat ul Urus* with similar problems from a woman's point of view. On the other hand, in *Ibn ul Waqt* (1888) he condemned not only the views of those who took to the new fashions and new civilization, but the excesses to which imitation in dress and manners was carrying the new generation. He had some shrewd thrusts at the smoking of cigars and cigarettes and the off-hand manners of the younger people, as they appeared to the older generation.

Hali, besides writing a strong plea for women's education, wrote his famous poem, the *Musaddas* (1879), which takes us to the wider questions of the rise and fall, the progress and decline, of nations. The last work marks an epoch in the modern awakening of the Muslims of India. Hali's argument is not perhaps historically accurate in details. But in flowing verse he draws graphic pictures of pre-Islamic Arabia and its fallen condition; of the rise of Islam and the elevation of the Arabs to a lofty eminence; of the progress which the early Muslims made in the arts and sciences, in which they led the world; of their subsequent neglect of the manly virtues which Islam had taught them, and their consequent loss of power, position, wealth, and honour. 'With my unskilful hands', he says modestly in his preface, 'I have built a house of mirrors, in which our people can see their face and form reflected', and he makes a strong and effective appeal to Indian Muslims to give up their ignorance, selfishness, intolerance, and want of cohesion.

The work done by Maulvi Shibli Numani in making the results of modern research available to the Muslim public in their vernacular calls for special mention, and since his death it has been continued under the competent leadership of Saiyid Sulaiman Nadwi in the institution, *Dar ul Musannifin*, which he founded in his native place Azamgarh. His researches into the past history of Islam were not merely for the abstract acquisition of knowledge.

He wished to spread knowledge in order that contemporary ignorance might be removed and contemporary life made more intelligent, fuller, and richer. He aimed at teaching the teachers, especially the religious teachers, whose shortcomings and narrowness were a scandal that leapt to the eye in Muslim India.

In devoting so large a part of our attention to work done in connexion with the Aligarh movement, we do not suggest that all credit for modernism in Muslim India should be attributed to it. What we do suggest is that Aligarh was typical of the modernist movement which was spreading in all parts of India in different forms, particularly in the Punjab, in Hyderabad (Deccan), and in Bombay. And many other movements allied themselves with Aligarh, or lent Aligarh their support and countenance. Since the death of Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan the prestige of Aligarh has to some extent suffered a decline, both in education and in cultural leadership, even though the college was raised to the status of a university in 1920. There are more Muslim centres now, and the leadership of the Punjab in modernist Muslim India has been silently achieved within this generation.

Some of the men whom we have already mentioned belonged to the Punjab, which lent very great support, both financial and moral, to the ideas and impulses affiliated to Aligarh. While Urdu seems to have lost some ground in the United Provinces and other provinces of British India, on account of political currents and cross-currents, it still retains a strong position in the Punjab, where, alone of the provinces in British India, it remains the predominant official language. The vigour and directness of the Urdu writers of the Punjab reflect the Punjabi character. They deal with concrete things. Even if they do not soar into the highest regions, they give a touch of actuality to the modern life and the western ideas surging around them. Perhaps the greatest credit in this connexion is due to Maulvi Muhammad Husain Azad of Delhi, who, during his twenty-five years' work in Lahore (1864-89), laid firm the foundations of Urdu in the Punjab and took a leading part in the organization of Urdu education in that province. He was a man of marvellous memory and intellect and had travelled extensively in Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. He spoke the living Persian of his day, and not merely the language learnt from books. In the same way he made Urdu a language of living interest, not merely a record or following-up of previous tradition. Urdu poetry he purified, both from old forms and old traditional subjects, and he brought back poetry from exaggerated similes, far-fetched metaphors, and too finely drawn-out word-conceits to subjects of nature and human life. Artistic embellishment, he pointed out, was 'like salt to food, but what should we think if food



was all salt and nothing else?'<sup>1</sup> His *mushairas* (meetings which were the occasion of poetical contests) had definite subjects given out to them, like 'Rain', 'Patriotism', 'Bigotry', &c., and not mere rhymes to cap. His *Ab-i-Hayat* was a fine literary history of Urdu on modern lines. It was a pioneer piece of work, and in spite of inaccuracies in detail, for which he relied too much upon memory, it holds the field as a popular presentment of the growth of Urdu literature.

The Punjab literary movement claims Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1876-1938) as its best-known international figure. In the early days of his career he was connected with Punjab education, and his European education, in England and Germany, makes him representative in many ways of the interaction of eastern and western civilizations. His activities were many-sided. He took some interest in current politics, having presided over the All-India Muslim League at Allahabad in 1930 and served a term in the old Legislative Council of the Punjab. But provincial politics afforded too narrow a field for him, and in all-India politics he was more of a philosopher than a practical statesman. His genius lay in the direction of developing a mystical interpretation of Islam as the final form both for the development of human personality and for the working out of a great and eternal State coextensive with the whole of humanity. In the only book which he wrote in English, his chapters on the Spirit of Muslim Culture and on the Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam have a direct bearing on the subjects we are discussing. While he welcomes the reform in Turkey as 'creating new values' instead of 'mechanically repeating old values', his attitude to reform generally is expressed as follows:

'We heartily welcome the liberal movement in modern Islam; but it must also be admitted that the appearance of liberal ideas in Islam constitutes also the most critical moment in the history of Islam. Liberalism has a tendency to act as a force of disintegration, and the race-idea, which appears to be working in modern Islam with greater force than ever, may ultimately wipe off the broad human outlook which Muslim people have imbibed from their religion. Further, our religious and political reformers in their zeal for liberalism may overstep the proper limits of reform in the absence of a check on their youthful fervour.'<sup>2</sup>

He wholly approves of the spirit of the second Khalifa Umar, 'the first critical and independent mind in Islam, who at the last moments of the Prophet had the moral courage to utter these remarkable words: "The Book of God is sufficient for us"'.<sup>3</sup> This

<sup>1</sup> The quotation will be found in *Siyar-ul-Musunnifin* by Muhammad Yahya Taha (Delhi, 1928), vol. ii, p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> *Six Lectures on the Reconstruction of Religious Thought* (Lahore, 1930), p. 227.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 226.

implies that Iqbal would prefer an independent and progressive interpretation of the Quran itself to the many glosses put upon it by medieval commentators. It does not imply that he would go to the lessons of European experience except as a warning. For to him European civilization was bad, fraudulent, chaotic, unjust, and greedy. For comments on European civilization, he would go to such writers as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Spengler, or Karl Marx, who take a pessimistic view of it. He looks upon political and economic stability, peace, and justice as essential elements in religions, but he thinks that Europe has deserted them. His criticism of European civilization is expressed in many scathing lines and passages in his poetry, both Persian and Urdu. The following two couplets will suffice as a specimen:

The glitter of modern civilization dazzles the sight;  
But it is only a clever piecing together of false gems.

The wisdom or science in which the wise ones of the West took such  
pride

Is but a warring sword in the bloody hand of greed and ambition.<sup>1</sup>

The boasted power of the West is nothing but imperialism to oppress the weak, and the League of Nations is a mere society of robbers to parcel out the graves of those they have killed. The western freedom of women is not real freedom. The unwomanly virgin on the planet Mars in the *Jawid-nama* is an importation from Europe. Woman's true sphere is in a secluded life of love and family. Modern civilization is a godless civilization and can lead to nothing but self-destruction.

Though Iqbal's literary genius and his philosophic interpretation of Islam brought him his immense popularity, he was yet an isolated figure. He founded no school of literary thought, as his principal works were written not in Urdu but in Persian. In public affairs, and in building up the 'new temple' (*naya shikala*, to use his own words), his influence was negligible. To the conservatives he appeared as a man speaking a new language, and he trod on some of their cherished convictions. To the advanced school with a nationalistic tinge, his attacks on the West seemed to furnish an argument for their patriotism. But in other matters they remained cold. If there is an advanced school of any other tinge, it is silent in literature and daily life.

In the emancipation of women, though the Punjab is now fairly advanced,<sup>2</sup> it has by no means led the way. Bombay, under the

<sup>1</sup> *Nazar ko khira karti hai chamak tahriz hazir ki;  
Yih sanna'i magar jhute nagon ki reza-kari hai.  
Wuh hikmat naz tha jis par khiradmandan i Magrib ko  
Hawas ke panja i khushin men teg i karzari hai.*

<sup>2</sup> Two Muslim ladies are members of the Legislative Assembly of the Punjab,



lead of the Tyabji family, was a pioneer two generations ago. In the United Provinces Shaikh Abdul Halim Sharar (1860-1926) of Lucknow, the talented novelist and playwright, was an uncompromising opponent of purdah, and published a periodical to further his views. On the other hand, writers holding advanced views on other questions have been conservative in this respect, notable examples being Sir Muhammad Iqbal and Khan Bahadur Saiyid Akbar Husain of Allahabad, who have been caustic critics of purdah reform. In spite, however, of the protests of the more conservative elements, western modes of life are being gradually adopted; there are now several Muslim women's periodicals in the Punjab and in Hyderabad (Deccan), and though they do not all advocate the abolition of the purdah system, they are distinctly feminist in their outlook. Indeed, feminism, if it means the legal and social rights of women, was the essence of the reforms introduced by Islam. These reforms were obscured or suppressed by selfishness or ignorance, and there were not wanting Muslim writers in the ages of decline, who misinterpreted ancient texts to conform to the usages and customs which had since grown up. In the process of reinterpreting the spirit of Islam, none has rendered truer service than Nawab Chirag Ali Azam Yar Jang of Meerut and Hyderabad (1844-95) and the Right Hon. Saiyid Ameer Ali, a judge of the Calcutta High Court and the first Indian member of the Judicial Committee of His Majesty's Privy Council in London (1849-1928), though *The Spirit of Islam* written by the latter had perhaps more influence outside India than in India itself.

In the matter of marriage customs there is satisfactory progress. The age of marriage has risen, and plural marriages are fortunately becoming rarer and rarer. Cousin-marriages, leading to inbreeding, are still, however, common among the propertied classes. The leading incentive is the desire to 'keep the property in the family'. In the Muslim marriage the bride does not bring a dowry to her husband, but the husband has to give or promise a dower to the bride. The abuse of the system was to fix an impossibly high dower because it was not immediately payable, and to demand it in case of death or divorce or where there were dissensions between the families. In many cases the dower was taken by the bride's family instead of being left (as it should be in law) at the sole disposal of the wife. There is much awakening in this matter. The simpler rule of a reasonable *sharai* dower is being adopted more and more. The wedding ceremonies are being curtailed and simplified, and the bride, and not her family, is being recognized as having the right to control and dispose of the dower property.

and one of them, Begum Shah Nawaz, who is as conversant with western social life as with eastern, is a Minister in the government formed in 1937.

Education is still in a backward stage, both among men and women, but especially among women, as the figures for literacy make abundantly clear. At the last census (1931) the figures for literacy per cent. were 10.7 for males and 1.5 for females, compared with 15.6 and 2.9 respectively for all India. Special efforts have been, and are being, made for Muslim education, and the movement has not left out of its purview the education of girls and women. Nearly every Islamic *Anjuman* (i.e. society or association) in every province devotes some attention to this subject. The All-India Muslim Educational Conference, which meets annually at different centres, collects funds for the purpose, and has passed a number of resolutions urging it on the attention of the community. Along with the Conference a separate Women's Conference is usually held in purdah. Muslims themselves have started a number of girls' schools and women's colleges, in which the purdah custom is observed and religious education is combined with secular education, while general educational institutions are open for those whose parents do not insist on these two features. As a matter of fact, modern education, culminating in a university degree, has a distinct and graded market value in the marriage market. There are some Muslim Inspectresses and Deputy Inspectresses of schools, and special efforts have been made to adapt curricula to the needs and prejudices of the people. If the progress has been and is still slow, it is because of certain special features in Muslim social organization and also because of the paucity of Muslim teachers.

Having brought under review the western influences that have operated on the Muslim mind in India from an historical point of view, and noted the names of the leading characters who have helped in evolving the present situation, we now proceed to sum up the different departments of life and thought in which these influences have operated. The quickening effect of new contacts is to be judged not only by direct influences but also by indirect results and resistances. If we take account of this we shall find that there is scarcely any department of life which has not been affected by western influences.

Take religion first. The Christian missionaries have reaped no harvest worth considering among the Muslims. But their propaganda has produced a number of most interesting reactions on the side of the Muslims themselves. The apologetics which were followed by Shah Abdul Aziz and his circle were very different from those of Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan and Maulvi Chirag Ali. The former followed traditional methods and appealed to authority. The latter appealed to reason and modern thought, and in many ways departed from the orthodox interpre-



tation of ancient texts. Mirza Gulam Ahmad of Qadian (1838-1908) founded a new sect, which has a considerable number of followers, called Mirzais by friends and Qadianis by critics. They met the propaganda both of the Christian missionaries and of the Arya Samaj, which was itself organized among the Hindus on modern lines. The movement took definite shape in 1890. The Mirza Saheb claimed to be the promised Messiah of the Jews and Christians and the Mahdi of Muslim tradition. He believed in verbal revelation and claimed that God spoke to him in words. He also claimed to work miracles, to prophesy, and to be, in himself and in the events around him, a fulfilment of previous prophecies. He claimed not to be the bearer of a new dispensation or *shariat* but to be an exponent of the real teachings of Islam. In the words of the present head of the movement, 'Ahmadiyah is Islam itself, and not a mere offshoot of Islam, as Christianity was not an offshoot of Judaism, but was pure Judaism in a plain and simple form'. The Quran 'contains a complete code of teachings suitable to the needs of every age, and provides a remedy for the ills, and means for the moral and spiritual development, of all ages'.<sup>1</sup> The sect is strong in organization, and has an active missionary propaganda both at home and abroad.

Apart from sectarian movements, a much broader spirit prevails among the Muslims as a whole. Urdu and English translations of the Quran have been multiplied, and translations are found in many of the vernacular languages of India. Sufism is found in some parts, especially Sind and the North-West Frontier Province, but the most recent trends in religious opinion are in a direction away from mysticism. The approach is more and more to the practical simplicity of early Islam.

The influence of western ideas is apparent in two directions. Among intellectuals the indifferentism of modern secular life is not uncommon, and there is occasionally but rarely agnosticism. The majority of them remain faithful to the tenets of Islam, but hold that it is not immutable and favour a liberty of interpretation of the Quran which will enable Islam to be adapted to modern conditions in consonance with modern ideas. Such an interpretation, however, is opposed by the conservative school of thought, which finds support for its attitude in a well-known saying—*La bidaat fil Islam*, i.e. let there be no innovation in Islam. Reaction against western domination led after the conclusion of the Great War of 1914-18 to the Khilafat agitation, but this is now

<sup>1</sup> I have based my account of the Ahmadiya Movement on a paper written for the Conference on Religions of the Empire, 1924, by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mahmud Ahmad: see W. L. Hare, *Religions of the Empire* (1925), pp. 106-32.

practically dead. In any case it was more a political than a religious movement, though its religious phraseology attracted the Muslim masses. The Hijrat movement of 1920, which was one of its products, recommended a migration of Muslims to Muslim lands, but never commanded wide support. For the few whom it misguided, it ended disastrously, as the Afghans treated the migrants unsympathetically (to use a mild term). The Moplah rebellion of 1921 ended even more disastrously, as it cost many lives and ruined thousands of homes. These, however, were frankly political moves. In more recent times the stress of politico-religious moves has shifted towards organization. The attitude is more communal than religious. The Muslim mind in India is content to remain in the traditional grooves of religion rather than be stirred by any great religious emotions. It follows with admiring interest the political movements in Turkey and Egypt, but is cold towards the modernist religious movements in those countries.

In education western influences are more positive. Modern education has been standardized in government schools and universities; and private and communal schools and colleges, whatever special distinguishing features of their own they may have, are yet made to conform to general standards by systems of grants-in-aid and general supervision. Even old institutions have tended slightly in the direction of modernization. Modern influences affect even the Dar ul Islam at Deoband, a theological college in the United Provinces, which is one of the homes of extreme orthodoxy. It sends out preachers and emissaries both within and outside India, but in recent years its influence seems to have waned, and its orthodoxy is coming more into line with modern tendencies. The Calcutta Madrasa, which is controlled by government, has a modern side, and the Delhi Arabic College has to submit to the standards of the Delhi University. The *Nadwat ul Ulama* in Lucknow owes a great deal of its modernization to the efforts of Maulvi Shibli Numani. The *Jamia Milliyya* of Delhi was started under the impulse of Muslim nationalism by the late Mr. Muhammad Ali as a rival to the Aligarh university, but is, under its present competent management, of a severely modern and practical type. The *Firangi Mahal* used to be a stronghold of extreme orthodoxy, but its politics are coming into the orbit of the Indian National Congress under the distinguished lead of Maulvi Abul Kalam Azad, who, in his Urdu commentary on the Quran, has not disdained to use the results of the researches of modern European archaeologists in support of some of his arguments. It may be said generally for the whole of India that 95 per cent. of the students of this generation receive an education, even if it is not in English, of a kind wholly different from the



traditional education of a century ago. There is also a strong reaction against this spirit of modernization, and it has several counts of well-founded criticism. It is not, however, for us here to go into the merits of the question on one side or another.

In literature the influences are still more patent. And here the results have been achieved not so much by the co-operation and help of western people, as by the assimilation by Indians themselves of tendencies, characteristics, methods, and ideas, which their western education has instilled into their mental fibre. All the vernacular languages and literatures of India have been affected in this way. Speaking of Muslims we are concerned chiefly with Urdu. The structure of the language and its syntax have undergone some modifications owing to its contact with English. Its vocabulary has been largely enriched with modern terms derived from English. The attempt to stem this process by coining learned words of Perso-Arabic origin has to a large extent been neutralized by the logic of facts. In Urdu literature the influence of English has been studied in sufficient detail by Saiyid Abdul Latif.<sup>1</sup> We may not agree with his finding that there was no Urdu prose before the era of English influence, but there can be no doubt that Urdu prose has undergone considerable modifications under that influence, as can be seen at once on glancing at the columns of any modern Urdu newspaper. The Urdu novel has made great progress in lightness, flexibility, and unity. The pioneer publication, the *Fasana-i-Ajaib* by Rajab Ali Surur (obit 1867), was overburdened with old mannerisms and a rigid style of rhymed prose. The story rambled on without any relation to the facts of life, and there was hardly any delineation of character. Since then the novel has gradually undergone a complete transformation in form and style. There is now more attention paid to psychological characterization and the actualities of life. There is also a truer and more flexible prose. New forms of literature have come into vogue, such as the short story, the detective novel, essays, biography, history, and travel. The short stories of Prem Chand (United Provinces) are admirable, and a number of young Punjab writers are devoting themselves to this form of fiction.

The whole of the modern political movement is based upon western ideas, though their working in Indian conditions has led to considerable modifications in theory and practice. Separate communal electorates were insisted upon by the Muslims when the present electoral system came into vogue, and they have been claimed by, and granted to, other minorities in India, such as the

<sup>1</sup> See his book, *The Influence of English Literature on Urdu Literature* (1924). See also Ram Babu Saksena, *History of Urdu Literature* (Allahabad, 1927), pp. 206-10.

Sikhs, the Indian Christians, the Europeans, and the scheduled castes. The possession of a vote, either in local bodies or in provincial or central legislatures, has tended to alter the balance of social forces in the country as a whole and within the different communities. It is not only in the political field that the effects are seen. They are gradually transforming social ideas and habits and the customs of everyday life. The extension of the franchise has touched large classes of people. It is estimated that the new constitution of 1937 granted the vote for the legislatures to 30 millions of persons, of whom the majority are illiterate. The vote is used for other purposes besides politics, and the evils which Ibsen denounced in *The Pillars of Society* may be seen in action. What the ultimate results in the lives of the people may be, it is difficult to say. But in many of the private bodies and *anjumans*, the 'vote' figures as an important feature, and '*party-bazi*' (the play of a factious party spirit) has become an element to reckon with.

The irresistible force of example, opportunity, and environment in bringing in western influences is seen every day in such matters as houses, dress, furniture, sports, subjects of conversation, and modes of entertainment. The old-fashioned *haveli* (mansion), with its separate quarters for men and women (*mardana* and *zanana*), is fast becoming *démodé*. Even in the houses of the old design there is usually now a room or rooms where guests sit at chairs and tables, and smoke cigars and cigarettes, instead of reclining on carpets on the ground, supported by thick cushions, with a *hookah* (hubble-bubble) to smoke or a *pan-dan* on which to serve betel leaves and betel nut. The modern young Muslim considers a turban a bore and affects a fez (or Turkish cap so-called), or, if he is sufficiently advanced, a European hat out of doors and a bare head indoors. It is difficult to get tailors now who can cut and make old-fashioned dresses for men. Women, it is true, still adhere to *saris*, but they wear beautiful brooches of western make to keep them in position, and they wear underclothing of western style, though in this matter western fashions are also somewhat approximating to eastern. No one sees a *palli* or *duli* (dooly) in cities nowadays; the motor-car is the rage for those who can afford it, and the plebeian motor buses and lorries crowd urban thoroughfares.

The schools and colleges, though they still support some of the eastern games, are keenest about cricket, football, hockey, and tennis. The general run of talk is picked up from newspapers, and the old bazaar gossip is turned into the new journalistic sensationalism. The theatre itself was remoulded a century ago on western models. It has now given place to the cinema. In any large city there are ten or twenty vernacular picture houses, with 'sound'



films; and quite a number of people, innocent of English, go to English picture-houses, 'to see English manners and morals'. The wireless, helped and encouraged by official agency, has established a secure position in India. In the towns most well-to-do homes and educational institutions now have wireless sets, and there are community or public receiving sets in the villages. It is true the items which most interest the community are those which relate to their own familiar interests. But the broadcasting stations provide catholic programmes (of music, lectures, speeches, &c.), to serve both eastern and western tastes; quite often eastern ears listen to western programmes, and western ears to eastern, and quite a good few sample both impartially. If again you visit a modern Indian fine arts exhibition, you will find that the eastern pictures and exhibits are a mannerism, and the normal exhibits are western in tone, method, and subjects.

On the other hand, movements of reaction against western influences are not absent, though they are sporadic and, owing to the logic of facts, not very effective. Journals like *Al-Irshad*, a monthly issued from Amritsar, avowedly aim at waging war against 'westernism' (*magrabiyyat*) among other things. Probably the other aims of such publications have a more direct appeal than the war against westernism, but in any case neither their circulation nor their influence is to be compared with the force of the rising tide of westernism that is flowing into men's minds and habits consciously or unconsciously. The periodical meetings at which westernism is denounced from pulpit or platform are attended by way of religious or communal duty, but the very people who do lip service to such propaganda are often found among the foremost of those in the other camp. The literature of anti-westernism is growing more and more feeble, as it is usually completely divorced from the actualities of modern life. Perhaps its most caustic verse-exponent was the late Saiyid Akbar Husain, whose *nom de plume* was Akbar. He attacked modernism from many points of view. Of the 'Young Party's' social reform he said that 'the remedy was worse than the disease'. Their politics he compared to 'an owl teaching the hawk to be a nightingale'. Laughing at science and materialism, he says: 'The days are past when they searched for the light of God in their hearts; now they test what phosphorus there is in the bones.' Modern progress he thinks evil: 'the devil invented a new way to bring down men; he said, Let us give them a taste for "Progress".' The decline of religion is thus satirized: 'He teaches us courage by saying, "It is cowardice to be afraid of Hell".' Elsewhere he says: 'Not through books or colleges is religion to be attained, but only through those venerable (in faith).'

The old issues debated by Maulvi Chirag Ali, such as *jihad*,

slavery, captives of war, the position of Muslims in a non-Muslim State, and of non-Muslims in a Muslim State, and the controversies about the precise meanings to be attached to texts, are now matters of historical or academic interest, discussed by the learned, rather than matters of present concern. Attention is now focused on the practical issues of social and economic problems, e.g. how far exorbitant dowers are permissible in marriage; how far usury (which is forbidden) is to be distinguished from economic interest, which is in the nature of a share in profits; how far purdah tends to injure the health of women, to affect mothers in the upbringing of their children, or in the management of their households, and to prejudice the evolution of the larger interests of society; and how far plural marriages, which on principle are condemned, can be prohibited, as they are in Turkey. In all these matters, the actual trend of events is more important than theory or argument, and the trend has decidedly set, in circles that count, in the direction of the usages of the West.



## CHAPTER XII

### PRIMITIVE TRIBES

**B**EFORE it is possible to consider the effects of western contacts upon the primitive tribes of India, it is necessary to form some idea of the position before the British occupation. The way in which primitive tribes fade off into castes, generally into depressed castes, without any very clear line of distinction to show where tribe ends and caste begins, is indicative of the way in which this position came about. India has clearly been subjected in the course of her history to many waves of invasion, and the defeated peoples have been able to retain their own culture only in the fastnesses of the forests and hills. Again, apart from physical conquests and force of arms, the people of the plains have been subject to cultural conquests, such as those of Hinduism and Buddhism, which have again affected all those people with whom they have made easy and continuous contact, but have touched in very much slighter degree the tribes secluded by natural obstacles from ready and frequent access. In the third place, stresses of various sorts from famine, revolution, conquest, and what not, have led to the isolation of groups of people, whether compelled to migrate to the mountains, or to wander without any fixed abode, and so, by way of loss of caste, to loss of culture and to a reversion to primitive standards of life.

The condition, then, of the primitive tribes, as we know them to-day, is the result of two distinct causes. It comes, on the one hand, from seclusion and the consequent retention of primitive conditions, and on the other, from degeneration and loss of culture. In some cases, of course, both causes may be operative in the same tribe, and a people may, instead of merely progressing much more slowly than the major part of the population, degenerate and lose even the culture that they had. In general, economic factors must have largely controlled the situation. Where a tribe occupies inhospitable country of which there is little desire to dispossess it, and much difficulty in doing so, it will be left alone, not only by rulers seeking territory and by colonists in search of land, but also by the Brahmans, who have been the apostles of Hindu culture and religion wherever the wealth or prosperity of pagan kingdoms was enough to attract them. In this way, in some cases a whole tribe, as in the instance of the Meithei of Manipur, in others, as in those of Tripura and of Bastar, the ruler and his family have become Hindu, while the surrounding tracts have maintained their tribal religions.

The methods and the effects of peaceful penetration of the latter kind are well illustrated in the administration of the Gond state of Bastar, of which an admirable account has recently been published.<sup>1</sup> Here, as in many parts of India, the ruler and his ministers, having turned Hindu, have settled with foreigners of their adopted religion villages and lands, the occupants of which have become cultivating tenants of the lands they formerly owned under tribal custom. The tendency of petty princelings to ape the pomp of potentates has inevitably led to the oppression of their people. The process has been described by Sarat Chandra Roy in his chapter on the medieval history of the Munda tribe.<sup>2</sup> There the defeat of the tribal kingdom by Muslim generals from Delhi led to the payment of tribute, and so to the introduction of foreigners, partly perhaps as financiers, partly perhaps to prevent the tribesmen from revolting against taxation. These foreigners had to be provided for, and this was done by means of grants of villages. The Maharaja, as the lineal representative of a Munda tribal chief, can have had no absolute proprietary rights over village land himself, and by these grants, which were recorded by literate foreigners imported from Bihar in the forms to which they were accustomed, he may have 'meant no more than to relinquish his claim to supplies in favour of the *jagirdar*'.<sup>3</sup> In effect, however, the realization of dues in kind which were of the nature of tithes led to the substitution of payments in cash in lieu of kind, and to the interpretation of these payments as rent. In the case of the Mundas, apparently the *jagirdar*, having established a right to rent, then established a right to occupy certain land for his own maintenance, and ultimately the *jagirdar*, if he did not succeed in ousting the Munda villagers altogether, annexed half the cultivable land of his village, the remainder still being held rent-free by the descendants of the original settlers.

The case of the Mundas is taken as typical, for the facts have been carefully investigated and recorded, and the process of penetration by Hinduism was slow and comparatively recent. It seems likely that it was a similar process, carried very much farther, that created the position of the Mahars, for instance, in western India as a servile caste but one associated with the maintenance of village boundaries, while it is conceivable that the position of the Parayans of South India, who used, until the British occupation, to be bought and sold with the land to which they were attached, was reached in the same way, if it was not the result of conquest and enslavement outright. But these are cases of caste and cannot be

<sup>1</sup> W. V. Grigson, *The Maria Gonds of Bastar* (1938).

<sup>2</sup> S. C. Roy, *The Mundas and their Country* (Calcutta, 1912), ch. iv.

<sup>3</sup> The holder of a *jagir* or assignment of land.



properly treated in this chapter. It is enough here to say that many other primitive tribes—Kolis, Bhils, Gonds, Kondhs, Sawaras, Santals, Baigas, Bhuiyas, and a host of others—have suffered similarly in a greater or less degree, according to the relative isolation or otherwise of their habitat, some, like the Bhars, who lived wholly in the plains, disappearing as a primitive tribe and surviving only as a caste.

The tragedy is that the object of the tribalist in claiming caste, or in allowing his tribal membership to be treated as membership of a caste, is to obtain social uplift, but the more general result is to achieve merely a greater degradation. Any tribesman outside the pale of Hinduism is potentially, at any rate, a member of a warrior caste, a Vratya Kshatriya, and sometimes, as in the case of the Meithei, he may succeed in entering the Hindu fold as a Kshatriya of sorts. But in the great majority of cases he becomes an untouchable like the Ganda, the Pankha, the Pardhan, the Nagarchi, the Musahar, the Dombu, and a host of others, even the cultivating Koli being often so treated. It is with those sections who succeeded in surviving as a tribal entity under primitive conditions in their own hills until brought into contact with the British that we are really concerned in this chapter.

Far from being of immediate benefit to the primitive tribes, the establishment of British rule in India did most of them much more harm than good. As a result of their impingement upon a co-ordinated and powerful administration, instead of upon disunited, jealous, and inefficient units, many of them, who had previously maintained their independence in their inclement hills, suffered invasion and subjugation for the first time in their tribal history. An instance of this kind is to be found in the history of British relations with the Mal Paharias of the Rajmahal Hills.<sup>1</sup> Before the British in India came into contact with them, their relations with their neighbours in the plains of Bihar consisted of intermittent raids by hill-men and irregular payments of blackmail by the plainsmen, with occasional incidents of treachery and massacre, as when in 1756 the landowners of the plains invited the Mal Paharia leaders to a religious feast, filled them with liquor and, when intoxicated, butchered them out of hand. The famine of 1770 offered to the Mal Paharias, comparatively untouched by it in their hill fortresses, an opportunity for raiding and looting on a larger scale than usual, and in 1772 the Honourable East India Company, by then in control of the surrounding districts, raised a corps of light infantry for their protection against the hill-men. This measure did not prove very successful, and after six years' trial a new method was adopted. Subsidies, contingent on good

<sup>1</sup> F. B. Bradley-Birt, *Story of an Indian Upland* (1905), chapters iii, iv, and v.

behaviour, were paid to the head-men of the Mal Paharias, police outposts were set up along the foot of the hills, and the lands there were settled with retired sepoy on service tenures. Under this system subsidies were allotted by Cleveland (or Clevland), the Collector of Bhagalpur, amounting to Rs. 15,000 per annum, and he made the influence thus acquired effective by raising a corps of 400 Mal Paharia archers, which functioned as an effective police force, keeping order in the hills by tribal methods, and enforcing the decisions of the tribunal created by Cleveland and known as the Hill Assembly, which dealt with all offences subject—save in the case of the death penalty—to the Collector's powers of veto or revision. At the same time, the country of the Mal Paharias was made a government estate holding rent-free from government direct.

After the death of Cleveland the system gradually fell into decay, owing largely to the neglect of the area by successive Collectors of Bhagalpur. Nevertheless, it managed to continue to function until 1827, when the Regulation of 1796, under which these hills were withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the regular courts, was repealed, though considerable powers, as to the determination of the guilt of an accused hill-man and the law to be applied to him, were left with a committee of head-men, who were also given powers in petty cases of a civil nature. But Mr. Ward, on whose recommendation these changes were made, and whose actual recommendations were for far more sweeping changes than the government accepted, also excluded considerable areas from the Rajmahal Hills, in some cases with very great injustice to their inhabitants. In 1871, some time after the Santal rebellion, the Mal Paharias' tract was brought under the same administration as the adjoining areas, by then occupied by Santals, of whom we have something to say below.

To take a rather different type of case, one may cite that of the Mers of Ajmer and Merwara, who had successfully resisted attempts to subdue them by Rajput States, whether singly or in combination, but found themselves conquered in 1819 by the British and handed over to Mewar and Marwar. The sort of administration that followed led to so much disturbance and banditry that the country had to be partially resumed and placed under British administration two years later. At a somewhat later date a rather similar process took place on the other side of India in the State of Manipur, where the somewhat vague and fluctuating authority over the neighbouring hill tribes exercised by the Raja and his Meithei fellow tribesmen, all more or less hinduized, was defined, confirmed, and strengthened by British suzerainty; in this case it proved ultimately necessary to ensure that the authority of the State over these tribes should be exercised under British super-



vision. The other Assam hill tribes for the most part either fell under direct British administration or remained uncontrolled except by the payment of subsidies—one hesitates to call them unequivocally 'blackmail'—during good behaviour, a rather unsatisfactory policy pursued by the pre-British rulers of Assam, which continues in some degree down to the present, though it does not obviate the necessity for occasional intrusions with an armed force into the tribal territory.

Those tribes in Assam whose territory was annexed and constituted into districts of British India are probably among the most fortunate of the primitive tribes of India in their relations with government. Occupying as they did rather inaccessible areas with truculent and fairly homogeneous populations, they have been administered largely in accordance with their own customs and have suffered comparatively little from exploitation by peoples of the plains. This, however, has by no means been the general rule. In Chota Nagpur the establishment of British authority led to more general and more thorough victimization of the aborigines. In 1800, for instance, the Collector of Bihar visited Ramgarh and reported to the Board of Revenue that he saw no grounds for exempting Chota Nagpur from the operation of the ordinary Regulations, and he proposed measures for the realization of excise and stamp fees. With all procedure in the hands of literate foreigners from Bihar and Bengal, who were ignorant of even the language of the aborigines, and with their villages largely in the hands of alien landlords, whose efforts were continually directed to expropriating the tribesmen from such rights in land as they still exercised, and with administrative officers who not only knew nothing of tribal customs and languages, but were anxious to introduce uniform and standardized administration and procedure, the primitive tribes of the plateau were naturally worse off than they had ever been before. This state of affairs was clearly reflected as early as the revolt of 1789 by the people of Tamar. This was quelled by Lt. Cooper's expedition of that year, but disturbances followed again in 1794 and 1795, and further insurrections in 1811, 1817, 1820, and a still more serious one in 1832. The Minutes of Mr. Blunt, a member of the Governor-General's Council, who had himself served in the area concerned, on the causes of this last insurrection make it very clear that both the insurrections of 1817 and of 1832, and it is no less true of the others, were primarily due to the illegal deprivation of their rights in land which Hos, Mundas, and Oraons had suffered, aggravated by many other and various acts of oppression by *sads* and *dikus*, i.e. Hindu and other foreigners, introduced into the villages of the plateau under the aegis of British rule, either as landlords or their agents, or as the tax-gatherers,

excisemen, and police of the Honourable East India Company's administration.

The result of this rebellion was the administration of Chota Nagpur as a non-regulation area with an increased police force maintained partly by the Company and partly by the local landowners. This benefited the inhabitants little. The struggle of the aborigines was transferred to the courts, where the language was Hindu and the practitioners Hindus. The police were Hindus too, and, as Col. Dalton says,

'It often happened that the unfortunate Kol, who with difficulty made his way to the far-off station, found the tables turned on him when he got there. A posse of witnesses in the pay of the opposite party were already on the spot prepared to prove "that he not only had no rights to the land, but was a turbulent rebel besides".'

This state of affairs continued, for we find a member of the Board of Revenue reporting in 1854-5 that the tribal lands still existing in every village had been exposed to the rapacity of 'aliens who were hated by the people, and who, to obtain these lands, spare no species of force or fraud. Against these our courts do not afford any facile remedy.' Again, 'with alien farmers, alien omlah,<sup>2</sup> and alien subordinates in all departments over them, doubtless the Kols must have much to endure'. He states also elsewhere that the class of original landowners is quickly disappearing as such, though still existing as one of discontented tenants brooding over their wrongs. For many of them their opportunity occurred a few years later; for in 1857-8 advantage was taken of the Mutiny disturbances by many Kols, Mundas, and Oraons to attempt to repossess themselves of their lost inheritance. At the same time attempts were made by the new landowners to take the same opportunity to harass the aborigines who were converts to Christianity, since these had been prominent in resisting illegal exactions of one sort or another. The disturbances that followed lasted till 1859.

Meanwhile a register of part of the ancestral tribal lands was started in 1858, and the fact that this was being made seems to have pacified the tribesmen for the time being. This register culminated in the Chota Nagpur Tenures Act of 1869, and operations under the Act lasted till 1880, but it failed to remedy the grievances of the tribes. Not only did it come much too late, but the larger portion of the tribal land, or land that had been such, was left outside the scope of the Act; and that, in many cases, included just those lands where tribal rights had survived in their strongest form. This portion of the Munda country was left, as the Settlement Officer in Ranchi in 1903 put it, 'to become the

<sup>1</sup> Loc. cit., Sarat Chandra Roy, *The Mundas* (Calcutta, 1912), p. 220.

<sup>2</sup> The clerical and other staff of the courts and administrative offices.



sport of the Ranchi law-courts', and litigation generally ended in the success of the longest purse, which was not likely to be a Munda one. Further Acts had followed that of 1879, but they failed to effect much improvement, and disturbances had broken out again in 1889 and 1890, in 1895, in 1897, and in 1900, when troops were again required to restore order. This resulted in an order of the Bengal government in 1902 for the complete survey and record of rights in Chota Nagpur. The Report on the Administration of Bengal by Sir Andrew Fraser, at whose instance an Act was passed in 1908 for the protection of the aboriginal peasantry of Chota Nagpur against alien adventurers, contains the following passages:

'Sir Andrew Fraser . . . found that through the ignorance of the courts aided by the apathy of local officers . . . immense injustice had been done to the Mundas by the agency of the law. . . . In Chota Nagpur the landlord is not the absolute owner of the land. The aboriginal raiyats enjoy special rights in respect of the enjoyment of forest produce, the clearing of waste, and the like. Their rents also are very low. The hereditary landlords acquiesced in their enjoyment of their customary rights. But when estates fall into the hands of aliens, the latter invariably claim full proprietary rights and do all they can to enhance rents. The cultivators are unable to hold their own in the law courts or to cope with the chicanery brought to bear against them.'

During a period of over a century, and in spite of half a dozen more or less serious outbreaks of armed revolt against the process, these alien landlords, whose original title was only to the nominal tribute paid by aboriginal villages to the Maharaja of Chota Nagpur, gradually and successfully arrogated to themselves extensive rights to lands, rents, and service, and in most of the area concerned succeeded in breaking down the old tribal rights over land. And this was largely, if not primarily, accomplished with the aid of the courts of law (one cannot call them courts of justice) established by British rule.

The story of British relations with the Santals<sup>1</sup> is perhaps even more illuminating, particularly as their case illustrates, better perhaps than that of any other surviving tribe, the scandalously cynical and selfish treatment that primitive tribes have almost uniformly received at the hands of landowners and money-lenders, particularly the latter, who have often ended by being both. Until about 1790 the Santals of the Santal Parganas and of the neighbouring lands to the south and west were the terror of western Bengal, and their predatory activities were largely the cause of Lord Cornwallis's assumption of the district administration of

<sup>1</sup> See W. W. Hunter, *Annals of Rural Bengal* (1897), chapter iv; F. B. Bradley-Birt, *op. cit.*, chapters vi, vii, and viii.

Birbhum district. During the decade that followed, however, the Santal was transformed into the husbandman of the Bengal plains. First hired to hunt the wild beasts that had multiplied and infested the land which the famine of 1770 had depleted of human beings, the Santal then took up the work of clearing the jungle and extending the cultivation of the Bengal landowners, a process tremendously stimulated by the Permanent Settlement. Although they lost none of their contempt for, and dislike of, the plainsman, high wages and low rents tempted large numbers of Santals to settle in the plains, and the flow of migration so begun ended in 1832 in a migration northwards on a large scale into the empty lands known as the Daman-i-Koh which skirted the Rajmahal Hills, an area of some 12,000-13,000 square miles of vacant land, marked off by masonry pillars from the hills on the one hand and from the plains on the other. This area by 1847 held some 100,000 Santals, a figure more than doubled by the end of the century, while there was an extensive migration also into the Nadia district and into other districts of Bengal.

The pacification of the Santals and their transformation into comparatively peaceful cultivators, both in their original hills and in their northern colony, the Daman-i-Koh, led to the penetration into Santal villages of numbers of Hindu traders and shopkeepers. The ignorance and honesty of the Santal enabled the first adventurous traders from the plains to make rapid fortunes out of the hill-men, and they were followed by numbers of others bent on making a similar rapid fortune by any means whatsoever. The Santal, bringing new land under cultivation, was reaping heavy crops of grain, and, unaccustomed to such affluence, was prepared to sell cheaply. Even legitimate trade is said to have yielded a profit of cent per cent., but the Hindu trader was an adept at cheating, and the simple hill-man was too easy to cheat. Even if he detected that the salt he purchased was weighed light, he was told that salt was excisable and therefore subject to special weights and measures, and he believed it. Moreover, opportunities for trade made opportunities for usury. Advances of money were given to families who had sold their grain and found that they had not kept enough for their own consumption, or to families who were clearing jungle for cultivation and needed an advance to go on with until they could sow and reap a crop. If the Santal accepted an advance, he became forthwith virtually the slave of the usurer. Whatever he reaped, the lender contrived still to show a balance outstanding—a balance which ever grew instead of decreasing, until the annual crop, however large, was always pledged beforehand to the usurer, who then returned to the cultivator just enough grain to live on till the next harvest, and retained his debtor



on these terms until it suited him better to dispossess him of his land. Meanwhile, his cattle and his goats, his wife's ornaments, and all his treasured possessions were sold to make payment towards the exorbitant interest accumulating against him, and the land itself became the property of the shopkeeper, while the owner who had cleared it of jungle and tilled it to fertility became the mere tenant-at-will, fed by his landlord for just so long as he was strong to labour and a willing tool. Little wonder that the Santal's scorn and despite of the Hindu turned into a bitter hatred. Even at the end of the nineteenth century numbers of Santals in the time of famine showed that they would sooner die than eat food cooked by the Brahmans they detested.

Nor had the Santal any redress. The British courts were perhaps 100 miles away. Their peons and police, besides being co-religionists of the oppressor and naturally inclined to side with him against the Santal, were venal, and the usurer could always bribe them, so that he was bound to succeed in any case in the civil courts. Generally, when the money-lender intended to dispossess the Santal owner, the latter was not allowed to know of the proceedings, or of the decree against him, until the officers of the court came to attach his land. McAlpin, in his *Report on the Condition of the Sonthals* of 1909, mentions a case, much later than the period referred to, in which some Santals had succeeded in recovering some shares in a village of which they had been wrongfully dispossessed, but the very shares which they had recovered had all to be made over to the alien money-lender who had financed their litigation. Worst of all, the civil courts enforced on the unlettered Santal the observance of written bonds, the real nature of which he was unable to comprehend, even if he were ever made acquainted with the contents before he signed the bond with his mark—the mere scratch of an arrow-head perhaps, but validated by the signatures of witnesses. Bonds of this kind contained undertakings to work for the creditor in consideration of the debt, whenever called upon to do so, until the debt and the interest were paid off, which, in practice, meant for ever.

Bradley-Birt cites an instance of such a bond for a debt of 25 rupees at 75 per cent. interest, for which the debtor worked during his own lifetime, was succeeded in the debt and the discharge thereof by the son, and he in turn by the grandson, the latter being only released after the Santal Rebellion, which led to improved conditions—thirty years, that is, after the original debt had been contracted. Even in the Daman-i-Koh the privileges of tribal law and custom granted to the Mal Paharias were not extended to the Santals, who were treated purely as a means of turning unre-munerative jungle into a cheap but valuable source of land

revenue. The very officer in charge of the settlement of Santals on this land had no magisterial powers and was unable to protect them in any way, nor was any effort made to learn about the Santals themselves, either their language or their customs, or to get into touch with them, or to remedy their grievances, or to be aware whether any grievances existed. The State was, in fact, taking taxation without giving anything whatsoever in return; the annual revenue of the Daman-i-Koh grew very rapidly from nil to Rs. 80,000 and the Honourable East India Company's officials saw only this rapid rise in revenue and the outwardly peaceful conditions.

It was the advent of better conditions, or rather the opportunity of obtaining them and the sight of others doing so, which brought the Santals to that last stage of exasperation with oppression that ends in rebellion. In 1854 the advent of the railway skirting the Santal country for some 200 miles, with deep cuttings, high embankments, and long bridges, created a demand for manual labour unknown before. There was work for every able-bodied man, woman, or child, and when the free, but landless, Santals, who had been recruited by labour contractors, returned to their villages, opulent with cash, there was an exodus of the free population. But a very large part of the Santal tribe were tied to the soil, pledged by contracts to work for money-lenders on a pittance of rice. The contrast between the rewards of their labour and the rewards of that of the hitherto perhaps even less fortunate landless labourer was too vivid to fail of its effect. The contract-bound Santals naturally absconded in some numbers, and their masters retaliated by using all the means at their disposal to strengthen restrictions, and hostages were often available in the form of the labourer's wife and children. A very good harvest in 1854 was accompanied by a high rise in prices owing to the influx of coin expended for work on the railway. The landlord reaped the profit, not the labourer on the land. Despair, ignorance, and the exasperation of poverty in sight of wealth led, as one might expect, to a widespread insurrection. It seems extraordinary that this should have taken place entirely unforeseen, as it was far from being sudden; and this fact alone is a measure of the complete neglect which had been shown to the conditions and the needs of aboriginal tribes.

Four brothers from a village which had been more than ordinarily oppressed by usurers came forward as leaders, proclaimed their mission inspired by the gods, and started a tribal movement which spread like fire. Yet in its beginning it was orderly. Applications for redress were made first to the revenue officers, then to the Commissioner of the Division. As these applications were refused, the whole man-power of the Santal tribe was called out



by means of symbolic messages to march down to Calcutta to petition the Governor-General. From all the valleys in the foot-hills parties of Santals, armed with bows and arrows, and moving to the intoxicating beat of the national drums, issued out into the plains. The bodyguard of the leaders alone is reputed to have numbered 30,000 men. On the 30th of June 1855 a sort of ultimatum seems to have been issued to government through the local police officers, and was intended no doubt to reach the Collectors of Bhagalpur and Birbhum and the Commissioner of the Division, demanding the regulation of usury, the reform of land revenue, and the expulsion (or extirpation) of Hindu extortioners in the Santal country. Naturally this ultimatum, delivered through corrupt subordinates, did not get very far.

The march was orderly while the food the villagers had with them lasted and while the movement was unopposed. But lack of food soon led to plundering, opposition to violence, and what had begun as a non-violent, orderly, and legitimate movement ended as an old-time foray accompanied by arson, plunder, and bloodshed. From some of the Hindu oppressors savage retribution was exacted. To the zamindar of Narayanpur, for instance, there were many old debts to pay, and the Santals cut off his legs at the knees, crying '4 annas', and at the thighs with '8 annas'; then his arms they cut off for '12 annas' and finally his head for 'payment in full'. On the other hand, the officer responsible for the Santal settlement, Mr. Pontet, who was known and beloved by the older generation, and who had in vain attempted to get their conditions ameliorated, was seized when he went to reason with the rebels and for his own safety forcibly detained in a valley in the hills until the rebellion should be over. The operations that followed were rather in the nature of unavoidable butchery than of fighting. 'It was not war', said Major Jervis to Sir W. W. Hunter, 'it was execution.' The bows and arrows of the Santals were ineffective against the well-armed British troops except in the ambushade of small bodies in the jungle; and the Mal Paharias of the Bhagalpur Hill Rangers, trained and led by a British officer, were more than a match for a much greater number of Santals. Yet the latter persisted in fighting, and again and again perished heroically to the barbaric music of their drums and flutes in a desperate encounter with a vastly superior enemy. The Santal did not understand surrender but only fought to the last; the total Santal losses are put at 10,000 men. Again and again Santal prisoners protested that they had no war with the British, but only desired redress from the exactions of their Hindu oppressors. Indeed, the European staffs of many indigo factories could easily have been massacred had the rebels wished, but generally the latter refrained from

attacking English residents except in self-defence. Nevertheless, the Calcutta newspapers were clamorous for severe measures. The wrongs of the Santal were ignored, his honesty and his industry were forgotten; he was merely a bloodthirsty savage to be shot like a leopard in the jungle. One irresponsible writer in *The Friend of India* even urged that the whole of the tribe should be deported *en masse* to Pegu.

The suppression of the rebellion was followed by better treatment. The Santal Parganas were made into a separate district, the administration was simplified, and the control of the police abolished. The village head-man was made the direct means of communication between the village and the district officer, and the people themselves were made responsible for their own policing. With the honest and simple Santal this system worked as well as it has done since with the administered hill tribes of Assam. Nevertheless, since the foreigner was not excluded from the district, the old ills showed a tendency to recur. As the leases fixed in 1865 fell in, landlords enhanced their rents, and the head-men who refused to accept the new rates were ousted. Outsiders were brought into their places who treated this post as one of an intermediate tenure-holder, rack-rented the villagers, and too often contrived to turn them into mere sub-tenants. Long-established customary rights were ignored. For instance, rent was demanded for the *mahua* trees,<sup>1</sup> a valuable crop to the villager, and one for which he paid no rent, and to which he looked to tide him over the hot weather. When rent for a *mahua* tree was refused, the landlord had the tree cut down and sold for timber, an injustice which, with others of the kind, nearly caused a second rebellion in 1871. Inquiry showed that, although the Santal Parganas had been made a non-regulation district in 1855, Acts which had thereby been excluded from legal operation in the Santal country had since been enforced in practice.

This led to the enactment in 1872 of a measure providing that only certain specified Acts should be in force, together with such others as government might afterwards extend to the district, and to a system of settlement under which rights in land were recorded and fair rents fixed. This was supplemented by further legislation under which any alienation of Santal land was valid only until the next settlement, the sale of a holding rendering it liable to confiscation by government. Tenants and sub-tenants were protected by a provision that they could not be evicted from their holdings without an order of the Deputy Commissioner. Thus, although some civil courts continued improperly to give permanent possession to a money-lender in virtue of a decree, the Santals were given substantial security against improper enhancements of their rents

<sup>1</sup> *Bassia latifolia*.



by landlords and against permanent dispossession either by them or by money-lenders.

These benefits were not shared by other Santals resident in districts outside the Santal Parganas, and in spite of half-hearted attempts to deal with their grievances by the resettlement of the Santal villages in Rampur Hat in 1882, of the Mollarpur estates and of the Burdwan Khas Mahals in 1892, they were not secure either from enhancement of rent or from dispossession. In 1882 no individual *khatians*<sup>1</sup> were given, so that the registers of lands held soon became useless as records of existing cultivation. In the Mollarpur estates there was nothing to prevent the assessment of excessive rents on newly cleared land, so that Santals could be largely used for opening up land, which could then be taken from them by assessing the rent beyond any they could pay and settling with a third party. In Burdwan no head-man's rights were recognized, and this led to the recording of the village head-man as the tenant and the other villagers as sub-tenants. In such a case default by the head-man enabled the landowner to dispossess the whole village. In one case, for instance, a money-lender bought the head-man's rights in a village, got recognition by the landlord, deliberately defaulted, and got sold up for rent. All the Santal villagers were then dispossessed on the ground that they were merely sub-tenants of the head-man. This sort of oppressive chicanery led to the Santal agitation of 1906-7 and the inquiry of 1909.

The results of that inquiry, and some of the individual cases that came to light in its course, are illuminating.<sup>2</sup> They show better than any number of vague statements the way in which the Hindu money-lender grinds the faces of illiterate hill-men. Thus, in the Rampur Hat subdivision of Birbhum at least 60 per cent. of private sales of land by Santals were found to be on account of previous debts, and the prices were very low because the money-lender 'can practically fix what price he likes, whilst the Sonthal has very little idea of the [money] value of his land'.<sup>3</sup> Some of the land so bought was given out again on temporary leases or on terms under which the Santal who cultivated gave half the crop to the new owner. But most of the land was settled with foreigners because they could pay a higher rate of rent. Rent decrees were found to be generally *ex parte* decisions, and in very few cases was the land given on usufructuary mortgage, which is what the Santal would prefer, on account of 'the greed of the *mahajan*<sup>4</sup> to obtain possession of

<sup>1</sup> A copy of an extract from the record of rights showing the area and boundaries of the land occupied by the cultivator, the nature of his tenure, and the rent he has to pay.

<sup>2</sup> M. C. McAlpin, *Report on the Condition of the Santals* (Calcutta, 1909).

<sup>3</sup> M. C. McAlpin, *op. cit.*, p. 24 sq.

<sup>4</sup> Money-lender.

the land without any chance of its going back to the Santal<sup>1</sup>. Every Santal, it was found, had to borrow grain from time to time during the year after the stock reaped at his harvest was exhausted. Such loans had to be paid back in paddy with 50 per cent. interest (in the case of grain lent for seed 100 per cent.) to the shop-keeper, who seems to have used different measures for the loan and for the repayment in order to avoid losing any fraction of his 50 per cent. on account of the shrinkage to which the newly reaped paddy, in which the repayment would be made, is subject. No matter when the loan was taken, interest for a whole year was charged, and for whatever part was unpaid at the end of the year compound interest was charged, so that a small amount of grain held over for repayment from one harvest to another at compound interest soon became considerable. The Santal would then be called upon for payment, generally effected by means of a sale or a mortgage, or, very rarely, by a usufructuary mortgage.

Once the grain debt was converted into a money debt, as was commonly done, the land went almost inevitably to the money-lender. Loans of cash were generally given at 25 per cent. compound interest, but sometimes at higher rates according to the time of year; and in some cases the money was lent for a repayment in grain at a fancy rate fixed by the money-lender plus 1 *ari* (about 20 lb.) of grain as interest on each rupee. In one instance, a Santal borrowed Rs. 2 in cash, and the rate of repayment fixed was 7 *ari* per rupee, plus 1 *ari* per rupee interest. As the actual rate at the time of repayment was 3 *ari* per rupee, the amount repaid was equivalent to the original loan, plus 167 per cent., though such a high rate, it must be admitted, was not found to be common. The raising of rents was done most unscrupulously by intermediate tenure-holders, who were far more extortionate than the original landlords. An attorney who bought a village at an auction sale proceeded to raise rents from Rs. 18 to Rs. 93, while in many villages the rights of the Santals were entirely ignored, even when recorded in a record of rights. Cases are cited (to take three instances at random out of a large number) of Santals holding 39 *bighas*,<sup>2</sup> 38 *bighas*, and 102 *bighas* of land in 1892. They retained in 1909 only 20, 18, and 37 *bighas* respectively, while their rents had risen in the first two cases from Rs. 26 and Rs. 25 to Rs. 32 and Rs. 31 respectively, that in the third case remaining approximately constant, though less than half the land remained.

Conditions in districts other than Birbhum were similar. On an estate in Midnapur it was found that in twenty-five years 31 per cent. of the land held by Santal, Bhumij, or Munda tribesmen had passed into the hands of foreigners, and that the better

<sup>2</sup> A measure of land equivalent to about five-eighths of an acre.



not the poorer land, dispossession being always greatest where the money-lender had succeeded in securing the tribal head-man's rights. In Bankura district Santal villages were found to have been largely leased or sold to intermediate tenure-holders who were money-lenders. An instance of the results of this is cited from the Chhatna estates, where a substantial Santal head-man was broken by having a civil suit lodged against him for compensation for having excavated an earthwork and turned waste land into cultivation, and a criminal case for having cut down trees, and a title suit for the uncultivated area, and a rent suit for increased demand, all simultaneously. The Santal head-man actually won each case in court, but he and his co-sharers had to mortgage all their land to raise the money to fight the cases, and on the termination of the suits all their lands had to be transferred to the mortgagees. To take one more case in another part of the district: two villages are reported where the head-man was the son or grandson of the original clearer of the jungle, the man who made the first existence of the village possible; in both villages money-lenders had obtained the land of a considerable number of the Santal proprietors, had put them into their own land as under-tenants, and had subsequently enhanced their rents by amounts from 4,000 to 7,000 per cent.

McAlpin's report, from which these instances are taken, is less than thirty years old, and the process is familiar to-day wherever there are aboriginal tribes still in possession of land in the plains from which it is worth while to oust them. The writer knows of recent cases in the plains of Assam, while the Deputy Commissioner of Nagpur District in the Central Provinces reported at the census of 1931<sup>1</sup> that ever since the 'sixties the numbers of Gond proprietors 'have steadily fallen owing to their ignorance of the civil laws and the ease with which they have become a prey to money-lenders'. He points out that the Land Alienation Act was not extended to the district of Nagpur, and that the result has been to reduce Gond landowners, formerly numerous, to a mere half-dozen, while 'the tendency is also to expropriate Gond tenants . . . most are degenerating into landless labourers'.

The Mundas and the Chota Nagpur tribes, and the Santals of the Daman-i-Koh, have been used above as an illustration of one way in which the British occupation of India has affected primitive tribes. It must not be supposed for a moment that the experiences of these tribes are in any way unique, even though smaller tribes, less effectively organized or less tribally conscious, cannot show the same record in vain repetition of forlorn rebellion. All who

<sup>1</sup> *Census of India, 1931*, vol. xii, i, 'Report on the Census of the Central Provinces', by W. H. Shoober, Appendix III, p. 401.

have not been protected by the exclusion of the settler from the plains, money-lenders and lawyers in particular, and by the maintenance of tribal customs, have suffered the same break-up of village life owing, principally, to the intrusion of foreigners as intermediate tenure-holders between the landlord and cultivator, or otherwise as proprietors of what were formerly tribal lands. This has led to the deliberate extrusion of tribesmen in favour of foreign cultivators, to the decay or complete loss of the village offices formerly held by tribesmen, and to the consequent inevitable break-up of tribal solidarity and the disintegration of the village community.

The missionary, too, has contributed to this, and although he has often had much to give in exchange which has not been without its material and economic value to the primitive tribes, his influence has certainly tended to destroy the social unity of the whole. Christianity has too often brought not peace, but a sword dividing father against son and a household against itself. Indeed, the Catholic Church has set loyalty to itself before loyalty to the tribe to such an extent that in Chota Nagpur Catholic converts have been forbidden to join tribal movements independent of religious belief but aimed at the social uplift of the tribe as a whole, whether Christian or pagan. A breakdown of the communal life of any tribe has, of course, rendered it far weaker in its struggle against such adverse influences as, for instance, forest laws interfering with its method of life. As an illustration of the way in which the primitive tribes have been affected by this aspect of British rule, it will be convenient to examine the history of the Baigas of the Central Provinces, whose primitive life has been attacked more by forest regulations than by land tenure.

The Baigas<sup>1</sup> practise a form of cultivation known in the Central Provinces as *bewar*, which consists in felling and burning the jungle and sowing a crop for a couple of years, after which the ground is allowed to revert to jungle until its turn comes round for recultivation. Obviously this method of cultivation is expensive in land, but in some parts of India, particularly in hilly country, it is the only form of cultivation possible without terracing and irrigation, which requires much more skill and labour, and even then may be impossible if the water supply is scanty. This *bewar* form of shifting cultivation is common in many parts of Asia, Africa, America, and Oceania, and is not unknown even in Europe. Among the Baigas it is the only indigenous form of cultivation, and is still practised in some parts of the Central Provinces and, until its recent prohibition, in the Rewa State. To most of the tribe the practice of *bewar* cultivation is almost a religious rite, but in-

<sup>1</sup> See V. Elwin, *The Baigas* (1939).



evitably it brought the tribe into conflict with the Forest Department, and attempts to prevent it started as early as the Central Provinces settlement operations of 1867, when it was decided to treat the Baigas as having no proprietary rights to the land they cultivated by the *bewar* method, and to pursue a policy of settling them on plough lands and compelling them to abandon their *bewar* cultivation, for which they paid a tax of one rupee per axe. This policy met with an obstinate opposition, and little progress was made in substituting the plough for the axe in Baiga cultivation during the next ten years. In 1877, however, *bewar* was in some districts completely forbidden, and a certain amount of money was spent on providing Baigas with ploughs and bullocks and settling them in Gond villages, a deliberate attempt to break down the tribal life. Ultimately in 1890 a Baiga '*chak*' was formed—a hilly and useless tract into which all Baigas must move who were unwilling to give up their *bewar* and take to the plough; *bewar* was prohibited outside the Baiga *chak*. Even inside it, pressure was to be brought on the Baiga to abandon *bewar*, and many Baigas were unwilling to move into the *chak*. In these circumstances their condition is thus described by Verrier Elwin:

'Suddenly deprived of their ancestral means of livelihood, threatened with expulsion from the forests they had known from childhood, prevented even from growing root crops for fear that this should divert their attention from the plough, forced to adopt a mode of cultivation forbidden by their religion, yet unprovided with the means of purchasing ploughs and cattle, these Baigas endured some years of utter poverty and destitution. Those days are still vividly remembered. "There was no food, there were no bullocks, there was no money".'<sup>1</sup>

Inside the *chak* the Baiga inhabitants were handed over to the administration of the Forest Department, and non-Baiga settlers were admitted in 1895. No new Baigas are now admitted to it, and once a Baiga there surrenders his *bewar* he cannot recover it. *Bewar* is permitted at present in a few places outside the *chak*, mostly States and zemindari estates, under restricted conditions, though it has recently been forbidden in Rewa much to the distress of the Baigas there. Elsewhere, the Baiga has been compelled to take to the plough and to live the life of a normal Indian cultivator abandoning reluctantly his communal life and the tribal individuality.

Compared with some other tribes practising shifting cultivation, the Baigas have probably been fortunate in their treatment. At any rate they have experienced some measure of generosity in the provision of ploughs and bullocks when prohibited from *bewar*. Obviously the practice of *bewar* is uneconomic and detrimental to

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

the interests of the Indian community as a whole, except perhaps in certain limited areas and under conditions of strict control. And it has been prohibited in many other parts of India. Its restriction in the Kondh Maliahs of Orissa has more than once resulted in civil disturbance, if not in the active rebellion of the whole Kondh tribe, while the Chenchus farther south have suffered much as the Baigas have. In Assam government has adopted the same attitude towards shifting cultivation, there called *jhum*, that it did in the Central Provinces and denied any title to land not under permanent cultivation. This attitude, however, has rarely been enforced in practice in the hill districts, where, in point of fact, *jhum* land, however rarely cultivated, is generally the recognized property of some particular persons or family, no less than terraced and irrigated fields cropped year after year, though of course it is not usually nearly so valuable. If the Assam Forest Regulations, under which tribal land used for *jhum* cultivation is treated as 'Unclassed State Forest', were to be strictly enforced all over Assam, they would undoubtedly cause such widespread discontent and privation as to lead to open rebellion. Of the primitive peoples of Bombay, again, the census officer of 1931 writes as follows:

'the reactions of the Forest Laws on the Hill and Aboriginal Tribes have been considerable. Previous to the creation of the Forest Department, Hill tribes roamed the forest areas more or less at will, were generally the sole purveyors of forest produce, and destroyed forest growth as and where they chose. . . . It is true that the Forest Department employs a fair number of the forest folk, but the actual net benefit derived by them from the existence of a systematized administration is probably a good deal less than the profits formerly obtained from the almost uncontrolled exploitation of forest areas. . . . it is poor consolation to a simple and illiterate member of the Hill and Aboriginal Tribes, whose solitary desire is to live and let live, to be incarcerated in prison for offences against the excise laws, which to him mean no more or less than a monstrous denial of privileges enjoyed for centuries and deprivation of rights which he cannot conceive to be equitable from any point of view. . . . The application of the game laws to these people is merely bewildering to them and is met by a sullen and furtive resistance which sooner or later drives them to crime. . . . the amount of degradation and misery caused among, and silently endured by, the members of these primitive tribes, who do no more than follow their instincts and the practices of their forefathers. . . . receives very little sympathy or recognition.'

The statement of Mr. Dracup quoted above, and applicable to primitive hunting and collecting tribes in a number of provinces, raises yet another aspect of the general question here treated, and that is the excise laws. Excise laws have been implemented with



conflicting purposes either of which is inimical to the tribal population. In the first place, they have been administered with a view to making the sale of alcoholic liquor a monopoly and thus a source of revenue to the State. This has tended towards the suppression of private brewing, and consequently to the substitution of distilled liquor for infused drinks made from grain or from fermented palm juice, which are comparatively mild intoxicants. In so far as the policy of making the sale of liquor a State monopoly has had this effect, it has been extremely mischievous. The rice beers of India have been found by Col. Chopra of the Indian Medical Service to be a very important source of vitamins in a diet already too poor in them. Distilled liquor offers no substitute for the dietetic loss involved in the abandonment of beers such as *pachwai* or *tari*, but on the contrary is only too frequently apt to lead to excessive indulgence and alcoholism on the part of the primitive tribes who have once acquired the taste for it. The other policy referred to is that of total prohibition advocated alike by strict Muslims and strict Hindus, and the existing excise laws have often been treated (and are clearly likely to be more often so treated in future) as a means to enforce abstinence from liquor to the greatest possible extent. Such a policy, particularly when carried out by venal and officious subordinates, has too often meant a tyrannical interference with the private life of primitive tribesmen, many of whom, having no means of obtaining sugar, find some measure of alcohol a necessary item in their diet.

The enforcement of excise rules and the compulsory substitution of strong distilled liquor for mild brewed drinks have perhaps been felt as severely as anywhere in the hill tracts of Orissa, but the evil has been widespread, and it is a familiar practice of Hindu and Muslim excise subordinates to pounce on unfortunate primitives and search their houses for brewed liquor when they know there is a family feast, such as a marriage, or a tribal festival involving entertainment fixed for the near future. Very often the rule, if there be one, as there is in Assam, allowing a small maximum of home-brewed 'beer' per head, is not understood by those entitled to its benefit, and the whole apparatus of the excise laws appears merely in the light of one more means of wanton oppression on the part of uncomprehended and uncomprehending aliens. Nor is it always merely a question of diet. In the case of the Gonds of the Central Provinces, for instance, religion enters the case as well; for many of their festivals a small quantity of distilled liquor is required as a libation to their gods; they are not allowed to distil it and cannot afford to purchase it.<sup>1</sup> But it is as essential to the Gond ritual as *soma* was to the Vedic.

<sup>1</sup> Shoober, *op. cit.*, p. 401.

The Gond marriage customs suffer interference no less than their religious ritual. Apart from the part which liquor plays in the ceremonial of marriage, the provisions of the Indian Penal Code that deal with offences against marriage are utterly unsuited to the marriage customs of most aboriginal tribes. Gonds, Bhils, and other tribes, recognizing this, generally deal with their marital offenders through the medium of their own tribal or village councils. But there are always a few anti-social members of any tribe, and such men, if they happen to be dissatisfied with their fellow tribesmen's decisions, or if they know themselves to be in the wrong (as anti-social members of any community commonly are) and unlikely to succeed before a tribal tribunal, take the case to the criminal courts and cause much hardship to innocent parties by obtaining the misapplication of an alien code of law.<sup>1</sup>

So far the effect of western contacts with primitive tribes has been approached purely from aspects more or less implicit in an administrative system framed without reference to the interests of the tribesmen and in ignorance of or indifference to their special needs and their tribal customs. Something must be said of changes deliberately intended to benefit the tribes and ameliorate their condition, even though such changes have not always achieved the good intended. The extreme instance of this is perhaps to be found in the history of our relations with the Andamanese. Contacts between the Andamanese, quite the most primitive of the tribal communities in the Indian Empire, and the Indians and Europeans of the Port Blair settlement, both government officials and convicts, were deliberately encouraged from 1863 onwards with the intention of 'civilizing' the Andamanese. When persuasion failed to keep the primitive hunter in the 'Andaman Home' established for his uplift, restraint was resorted to, and the system was continued in spite of the fact that, although at one time births occurred in the 'Home' at the rate of two a month, no children born there survived. Contact with convicts and others infected the Andamanese with all kinds of infectious and contagious diseases previously unknown to them, which naturally proved far more virulent than they would have done to people partially at any rate immunized by longer exposure to them. Syphilis, measles, small-pox, these in particular decimated the islands. At a conservative estimate there were at least 4,800 Andamanese in 1858, though Portman, who knew them well, puts the figure at 8,000. The census of 1901 returned 1,882, and that of 1931 460, of whom all but 90 were to be found in the more or less sequestered tribes of the hostile and irreconcilable Jarawa of the Great Andaman jungles and Sentinel Island, and the Onge of Little Andaman. Of

<sup>1</sup> Shoobert, *op. cit.*, p. 402.



the 90 others, 16 were half-breeds. Clearly this race, perhaps the most ancient surviving variety of mankind, is rapidly approaching extinction. It must have survived in its isolation for some 5,000 years at least before it made a contact with the West, but 70 years of that contact have been enough to reduce its numbers by 90 per cent. Had the Andamanese been kept from contact with Indian convicts, and had no deliberate attempt been made to 'civilize' them and to compel them to learn 'useful crafts', such as agriculture, gardening, and the handling of boats, in the Andaman Home, the tribe might not only have survived, but ultimately, perhaps, been accommodated to a changing environment.

It is not, of course, suggested that all attempts at the 'uplift' of primitive tribes or all the results of western contact with them have been as disastrous as in the Andamans. To say nothing of such work as the suppression of human sacrifice and infanticide among the Kondhs of Orissa (which the Kondhs no doubt failed to regard as generally beneficial), much has been done in the way of educating hill tribes and teaching them useful arts both by local governments and, particularly, by missions. As instances, one may mention the Catholic and Lutheran missions in Chota Nagpur and the Santal Parganas, the Welsh missions in the Khasia and Jaintia Hills, and in the Lushai Hills in Assam, the American Baptist Mission among the Karens of Burma and the Ao Nagas, to say nothing of the work of government officials among Gonds, Kondhs, Bhils, Nagas, and many other tribes. And of recent years some work has been done by the Servants of India Society among the backward and depressed tribes of the Bombay Presidency, as well as by free lances like Mr. Verrier Elwin among Gonds and Baigas. Unfortunately, in not a little of the work started by missionaries and by government officials zeal has outrun the discretion which comes of knowledge, and the introduction of new fashions in clothing and in building have accelerated the spread of diseases, such as tuberculosis, introduced by opened communications and external contacts.

It is in the opening up of their country to the exploitation and settlement of outsiders that the hill tribes have probably experienced the greatest detriment. In very many parts of India the tribal people who owned the land or hunted at will in the forests have now become hewers of wood for alien occupants, whose drawers of water they cannot be, since their contact with it pollutes. Tea gardens, coffee plantations, coal-mines and oil-wells introduce, it is true, a certain amount of employment, but the cash which they pay in wages is often an inadequate recompense for the loss of lands and independence. In other ways, also, the primitive tribes have suffered by administration. While the advent of doctors,

dispensaries, and school teachers may prove to be mixed blessings, the multiplication of minor officials of other departments has proved an unmixed burden. Primitive tribes have suffered enormously from *begar*.<sup>1</sup> In the more inaccessible areas the means of transport is still often limited to human portage, and it has been, and still often is, only possible to obtain porters by some means of impressment. Generally speaking, a nominal wage is prescribed, but it will usually prove to be less than would have to be paid for such labour in a free market; otherwise impressment would not be necessary. Very often indeed no payment is made by minor officials, such as police constables, and where payment is made, the prescribed limit of weight for a porter's load (in Assam it is 60 lb.) is by no means scrupulously observed. In the case of some forest villages the right of occupancy may depend on the supply of a certain amount of free labour, and this may be supplied from time to time in the form of porters, but the system of impressment is open to very grave abuses, and has been, and still is, very gravely abused in many parts of India, the conditions in this respect being probably far worse in Indian States than in British territory.

Something must be said about the effect of British administration on the languages of the tribal peoples, though it seems unlikely that that effect differs, except perhaps in degree, from the processes already at work in pre-British India. It is clear that the tribal language, like the tribal entity, survives only where the tribe retains both geographical segregation and economic independence. The distribution of the Munda languages suggests very strongly the withdrawal of the peoples speaking them, or perhaps rather the survival of the use of these languages, for it is dangerous to correlate race with language, in those remoter and more isolated tracts to which the spread of Dravidian, and later of Indo-Aryan, tongues has been checked by the absence of free communications. Thus, there can be little doubt but that the Sawara of the Orissa Maliahs and of Chattisgarh, the Saonrs of Saugor, Damoh, and Bundelkhand, and the Saharia caste of Malwa and Gwalior all belong to the same original stock. Only the Orissa Sawara have retained the Kolarian language which all seem once to have had. Sir George Grierson gives an excellent instance of the process in the case of Nihali. The Nahal tribe seems to have spoken originally a Kolarian language akin to Korku, and after that, a mixed tongue, part Kolarian, part Dravidian, which is now well

<sup>1</sup> An Indian form of *corvée*, labour exacted as a service to the State. In Indian States it is generally unpaid, even nominally; in British India, where local conditions make it impossible to do without it entirely, rates of payment are laid down as a rule.



on the way to becoming an Indo-Aryan dialect. Similarly, the Baigas have lost their own Kolarian language, and speak either Gondi, which is a Dravidian tongue, or a dialect of Chattisgarhi, which is Indo-Aryan. In Bombay, the Dubla and Talavia, who have lost their tribal life and land and have become agricultural labourers, dependent on Gujarati-speaking employers, have also lost, or are very rapidly losing, their Bhili dialects and are using Gujarati instead. Indeed, Bhili itself has probably replaced some Kolarian language. In southern India all the primitive tribes, as far as is known, speak some dialect of one of the main Dravidian languages, generally Tamil. On the other hand, in parts of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, where isolation has lasted longer and later, tribal languages are more numerous. This is still more markedly the case in Assam.

In this matter of tribal languages, the effects of British administration have cut both ways. On the one hand, improved communications and the opening up of inaccessible areas have tended to introduce Indo-European languages where none were heard before. On the other hand, the spread of schools and the obvious desirability of teaching a child the rudiments of reading and writing in his mother tongue have resulted in the use of writing for languages that previously had no written character of their own. Missionaries too have had to reduce tribal languages to writing in order to enable the speakers of them to read the Scriptures. The general result of this is likely to help to perpetuate the tribal language, and so to counterbalance to some extent the speeding up of the process of assimilation. Generally speaking, the number of persons speaking tribal languages increased between 1921 and 1931, but probably this increase was not quite proportional to the actual increase in the population of the tribes concerned.

In the matter of religion it has been far otherwise. The census figures of 1931 were to some extent vitiated by a communalist campaign to return all tribal religions as 'Hindu', but, even allowing for this, there has been a great decrease in tribal religions (the actual census figures in 1931 showed a decrease of 15.3 per cent. since 1921) in spite of a very great increase in tribal populations. This decrease is almost entirely due to defections from the tribal religions to Christianity and to Hinduism. The change over to Hinduism is, of course, a gradual process like the changes of language, and the British occupation has only hastened it in so far as it has made the tribal strongholds more accessible to penetration, proselytization, and the general infiltration of Hindu influence and ideas. Conversion to Christianity, on the other hand, is generally largely the direct result of the penetration of the hills and forests by the British power.

The effect, then, of the British administration upon primitive tribes has been illustrated by specific cases, for the history of the British relations with all the primitive tribes of India could not be adequately summarized even in a volume, perhaps far less in a chapter, while broad generalizations are apt to be vague and unsatisfactory. It is, however, necessary in conclusion to give some sort of brief summary of general effects. It may be said that the early days of British administration did very great detriment to the economic position of tribes through ignorance and neglect of their rights and customs. The wrongs done to them in this way have sometimes been little less than those done to them in the pre-British days of conquest and dispossession, such as the Bhar tribe must have experienced in Bihar or the Kurumba in the Deccan. Subsequently, a period of greater understanding led to many attempts to protect and preserve the tribes, and though in many cases these may have come too late to do all they should, in some at any rate they have at least prevented the degradation of primitive tribes to the status of outcaste, gipsy, or scavenger which has been the fate of so many in the more distant past. Meanwhile many changes have been caused incidentally by the penetration of tribal country, the opening up of communications, the protection of forests, and the establishment of schools, to say nothing of the openings given in this way to Christian missions. Many of the results of these changes have caused acute discomfort to the tribes.

Their forest privileges have been curtailed and their exclusiveness invaded by alien settlers. Their own languages are being slowly supplanted by others, and their tribal customs and religious beliefs undermined. Tribal solidarity has been broken up. No longer can a tribe act as a unit. Some are pagans, some are Christians; some are still proprietors owning their own land, others are landless labourers; and some again are evangelists, school teachers, even doctors, literate and educated. The educated are to that extent separated from their fellow tribesmen, for very often a literate education proves to be an impassable gulf fixed between men of the same tribe. Anyhow, the tribe as a unit has often gone, and the same applies to the village community. Too often the tribal head-man has been ousted to admit a foreigner. Even if the priestly office be still filled, many of the villagers wander after the alien deities of the Hindu or the Christian. The tribal hunt is a thing of the past, and the village court cannot control the dissatisfied villager who rejects its decisions to seek those of British law-courts. Nor is the village community any longer self-sufficing. Thurston, writing in 1909, mentions that:

'tribes which, until a few years ago, were living in a wild state, clad in a cool and simple garb of forest leaves, buried away in the depths of the



jungle, and living, like pigs and bears, on roots, honey and other forest produce, have now come under the domesticating and sometimes detrimental influence of contact with Europeans, with the resulting modification of their conditions of life, morality and even language. The Paniyans of the Wynnad and the Irulas of the Nilgiris now work regularly for wages on planters' estates, and I have seen the Toda boy studying for the third standard instead of tending the buffaloes of his *mand*; a Toda lassie curling her ringlets with the assistance of a cheap German looking-glass; a Toda man smeared with Hindu sect marks and praying for male offspring at a Hindu shrine; the abandoning of leafy garments in favour of imported cotton piece goods; the employment of kerosene tins in lieu of thatch; the decline of the national turban in favour of the less becoming pork-pie cap or knitted night-cap of gaudy hue; the abandoning of indigenous vegetable dyes in favour of tinned anilin and alizarin dyes; the replacement of the indigenous peasant jewellery by imported beads and imitation jewellery made in Europe—these are a few examples of change resulting from western and other influences."

Thus new wants have been created—tailored clothes, bicycles, sewing-machines, lamps, and the minor gadgets of western civilization, which, once familiar, soon become necessities, but which cannot be made at home like the household utensils and the agricultural implements of primitive life. Money is needed to buy these gadgets, and the way of living must be changed to earn it. And herein lies one of the most serious of these changes, and that is the change in values. While a tribe remains in isolation, money is of little importance; wealth is reckoned in cattle or in crops, and a man's position is shown by the dispensing of hospitality, by the acquisition of social rank and status, and by the playing of a prominent part in village or tribal society. But the importation of cash and the free use of money produce quite a different state of affairs: one in which the man who most easily obtains money is too often a person whose social position in tribe or village is of no account to start with and whose character is frequently doubtful. The man who leaves the village to work as a servant or a labourer away from his country may be enterprising and have grit, but he is not often a highly respected member of his community with position and reputation to lose, and it too often happens that he returns from afar, affluent of cash and inflated of spirit, to loaf in his village as a corner-boy, and flout the traditions and customs of his elders, deriding them in the light of foreign practices which he has picked up abroad. His elders and betters, when they realize the new power conferred by the possession of coin on persons who to them appear to be unworthy, are only too likely to sacrifice their own tribal standards and prejudice the

<sup>1</sup> *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, vol. i, p. xv.

interest of their fellow villagers in the attempt to obtain this new source of power for themselves. Loss of self-respect and an inferiority complex are too commonly the results of the contact of the savage with civilization (and this in the case of India is emphasized by the caste system), to say nothing of the loss of the martial spirit which is suffered when the tribe is first subdued by superior discipline and weapons, and made to dwell peaceably for generations with nothing more stimulating than an occasional riot to keep the fighting spirit alive. The rivalry of the courts is substituted for that of faction or foray and a spirit of litigation for one of martial valour, while sometimes, it must be admitted, the spirit of adventure, no longer able to find an outlet in warfare, has turned to dacoity and organized crime instead.

And there are other effects which follow from changes of this kind. For instance, there is real danger in the assumption of European clothes without a proper use for them. In Assam, for instance, there can be no doubt that the use of clothes has aided the too rapid spread of lung disease, and tuberculosis in particular, among some of the hill tribes. Mr. J. P. Mills<sup>1</sup> points out that foreign dress encourages dirt 'since no Naga can afford the changes he ought to have in the damp heat of Assam', while he contrasts the unsophisticated hill-woman carrying her child down to the fields tied naked against her own warm and naked skin, and protected outside with a thick woollen cloth, with her sister taught by missionaries or by bazaar example to wear a thin cotton 'shirt-waist' and to clothe her child likewise. Both get sluiced with tropical rain, but in the one case there is warmth on one side at least, in the other it is prevented by a layer of wet clothing; and while in the one case, on returning to the house, the wet cloth is discarded and the bare skin dries rapidly near the fire, in the other case both mother and child are kept damp and clammy with unhealthy clothing, and pleurisy and pneumonia are too often the sequel. Second-hand clothing, too, is a great diffuser of tubercle; a Civil Surgeon in Imphal commented to the writer on the high incidence of consumption among second-hand clothes dealers in the Manipur State. Another effect of the change of clothing which accompanies conversion is too often the loss of the bright and highly picturesque costume of gala days condemned by missionaries on account of their heathen associations, and the substitution of a drab monotony of unwashed cotton garments. A somewhat similar consequence follows from changes in the methods of building. Thatch gives way to tin, and the house becomes subject

<sup>1</sup> *Census of India, 1931*, vol. iii, *Assam*, Part I, Report, Appendix A, p. iii; cf. *The Ao Nagas* (1926), p. 422, also Shoober, 'Census Report on the Central Provinces' (*Census of India, 1931*, vol. xii, Part I), p. 217.



to sudden changes in temperature which the old-fashioned thatched roof prevented, while the practice of daubing the walls with mud prevents healthy ventilation; and when the custom of shutting up the house at night to keep out bodily and, still more, ghostly enemies is retained, as it usually is, whether or not the practice of putting in windows be adopted, the atmosphere inside becomes a far likelier breeding ground for germs than under former conditions of automatically ventilated walled walls.<sup>1</sup>

Of the tribes mentioned by Thurston, the Todas are declining towards extinction. They numbered 807 in 1901, but only 597 in 1931, a decrease of about 25 per cent. The Paniyans, on the other hand, have increased from 29,000 to 32,000 during the same period, but they are shown in 1931 as a depressed caste not as a tribe, and in the 1901 census they appeared as Hindus, as also did most of the Irulas, for whom there are no separate statistics in 1931. But the tribes mentioned by Thurston were very far from being the only ones affected by western contacts, nor is his catalogue of effects complete. Very similar results are apparent in the Assam Hills wherever there is a motorable road, and the imports include diseases, gambling, and prostitution. It is unfortunate that the change of faith which attends missionary effort should lead to the abandonment of art in wood-carving, dancing, song (hymns, of course, excepted), and ornament, while even more serious perhaps in the Assam Hills is the Christian opposition to the institution of the Bachelors' House, where the male youths of the tribe are educated in the conduct and the traditions which enable them to live a life suited to their environment and to continue the social organization on which the communal life of the village depends. The inevitable result is the disintegration of the village community and the sacrifice of communal to personal interests. It is this factor that leads to the transformation of a proud and virile tribe into a depressed caste, though if the tribe were to present a united front to the influence of change, as in the case of the Meithei of Manipur, it might be able to effect the change without loss of prestige or self-esteem.

A rather unexpected result of the introduction of money is sometimes to be seen in marriage customs. In the Lhota Naga tribe, for instance, marriage in the old days implied payment for a wife in kind. The suitor started by working in the fields of his father-in-law to be, and after marriage completed payment for the wife gradually in the form of cattle or of grain set aside from his annual harvest. A large quantity of grain at one time is much less acceptable than a single payment of cash, since it involves storage room and the probability of its deterioration before consumption;

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Shoober, *op. cit.*, p. 462.

a large number of cattle is in danger of rinderpest, contagious abortion, or some other epidemic of that kind, to say nothing of wild beasts; but the possibility of getting final payment in a single sum of cash appeals to both parties, the parent because he can thus conveniently hypothecate the future without risk of his daughter dying before all is paid, the suitor because he can avoid the restrictions of personal service and receives possession of the girl, whom he can take off to his own house, often in another village, at once. The result has been a steadily growing change from the practice of marrying adult towards that of marrying immature brides. At the same time an excess of males over females in the tribe, combined with the custom of polygamy, makes it possible for the richer men to secure more than their share of the younger women, thus causing a competitive run on potential brides, which tends to lower progressively the age of marriage for girls, as the risk of not being able to get a wife becomes apparent to the younger men.

On the other hand, of course, there are definite gains; where tribal custom has been most cruel, it has been suppressed and warfare prevented, while the arts of reading and writing, the reduction of infant mortality, a knowledge of medicine, and the use of roads and post offices must be counted to the credit side in amelioration of their natural environment. Too often, perhaps, rapid changes in their manner of life and interference with tribal custom and belief have led to apathy, indifference, and deterioration, and to a decline in population. Too often, perhaps, have our ill-considered excise policies fostered intemperance or the garments of prudery helped the spread of phthisis. The introduction of currency and the substitution of values reckoned in coin for those reckoned in kind, or of wealth in money for tribal virtues of hardihood and hospitality, have led too often to moral deterioration. Where, however, adequate protection has been afforded, and facilities for slow change and gradual reaccommodation have been secured, such disaster can be avoided. The inhabitants of the Khasi States in Assam, for instance, have provided, among other servants of the public, a Minister in the government of that province and a professor of philosophy in a Bengal university. Their economic and social position in Assam is in complete contrast to that of many other hill tribes, particularly in South India. It seems likely that this state of affairs is due, at any rate in part, to the political treatment accorded to the Khasi tribe in the past. Although defeated and subdued by British forces, the Khasi Hills were never made into a regulation district, but, protected by special legislation, they were allowed to develop in their own way, retaining their own customs and, in a considerable measure, their own courts and the apparatus of self-government.



Wherever a similar policy has been pursued, it appears to have been a success. The case of the Mal Paharias has already been alluded to. In the case of the Santals such a policy proved to be a necessity to restore the tribe to peace and prosperity after its rebellion. In Assam again, in districts such as the Lushai Hills, the policy of segregation and government in accordance with tribal customs has worked admirably. In the Naga Hills, it is true, progress has been slower, but apart from the welter of varying custom, and at least sixteen different languages (to say nothing of dialects), the ancient polity of that group of tribes has always depended on the village as a unit—a village often divided against itself but always an independent unit with its hand against every other village. Even in such adverse conditions the policy of segregation, and of administration largely by tribal custom, has worked wonders, and in the Lhota Naga tribe, at any rate, it has proved possible recently to obtain the election or selection by villages of a representative council which, without any specific criminal or revenue powers, has become an instrument by which the tribe deals with many social questions, and has been enabled to tax itself (and has succeeded in so doing) for the improvement of its internal communications and of the education of members of the tribe. In Chota Nagpur, again, the hill tribes have shown that they are not without capacity to manage their own affairs no less efficiently than the people of the plains districts, and to produce, like the tribesmen of the Assam hills, the necessary number of doctors, teachers, and so forth, to fulfil the needs of their own tribesmen.<sup>1</sup>

This capacity, however, is not yet so well developed that it does not need a measure of protection to allow it to grow without subjection to the more fully developed political sense of Hindu and Muslim neighbours with a longer history of civilization and administrative experience behind them. Indeed, it is only by giving them protection that the hill tribes will have the opportunity to grow at all. This has been recognized in the Government of India Act, which has provided for areas both excluded and partially excluded from the working of the new constitution. Unfortunately, in the Act as finally passed, the protection afforded by partial exclusion has been dangerously impaired by substituting ministerial control for that of the Governor. This has made these backward areas liable to be used as pawns in the political game, so that the true interests of their primitive inhabitants are exposed to the danger of being sacrificed to the political interests of the more numerous electors in the plains, or to those who are able to profit by their economic or political exploitation and to pull the political

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Shoobert, *op. cit.*, p. 399.

strings to that end. Still more unfortunate is it, perhaps, that many of the smaller tribes all over India who are most in need of protection and least able to stand on their own feet are, owing to their geographical and social environment, deprived even of that measure of protection which is afforded by partial exclusion from the reformed constitution. For it is not beyond the power of India's primitive tribes, if properly treated, to stand on their own feet, control their own affairs, and contribute their own quota of original and individual genius to the national life of India.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE PROGRESS OF WOMEN

#### INTRODUCTION

THE impact of the West on Indian civilization has brought about changes that are more fundamental in the case of women than of men. To men it brought a new conception of the world, of its material resources, ethical standards, and political possibilities, but to the women it brought slowly but potently a new conception of themselves. If men reassessed themselves as citizens in a new India, women revalued themselves as human beings in a new social order. Profound as has been the penetration of the West into men's ideas of religion, caste, and national status, it has nowhere penetrated more deeply than in its revaluation of women. 'Let us go back to the Vedas', cry the women, 'to the days of women's equality with men, in religion, in marriage, in the right to hold property and serve the State', not always realizing that it was only through contact with western scholarship on the one hand, and educated and enfranchised women of the West on the other, that the dignity and freedom of women in Vedic times was once more revealed to Indian women.

On a superficial view it might seem that men in India have been drawn into much closer association with the West than women. From the first men met in the army, in trade, and in the administration of the country. Many Indian men learned English, travelled to Europe, criticized or appreciated European ideas. From all these growing associations the women were cut off. Nothing obliged them to meet foreigners or to acquire their language. Men were more and more drawn into the orbit of western activities, while the other half of India seemed as deeply entrenched as ever in its fortress of inviolable privilege and ignorance.

Yet all the time the very foundations of women's seemingly impregnable position were being undermined. When at last, in the twentieth century, the women, with dramatic suddenness, abandoned their traditional fastnesses, it became clear that a change far more subversive of Indian society was taking place in the case of women than of men. For with the men the gradual *rapprochement* had been mainly a matter of external contacts, of expediency and convenience, of fitting themselves into the machinery of modern life, while to women contact with the West brought a totally new conception of themselves as persons individually important and nationally needed. It was a spiritual revolution

profoundly affecting the foundations of society, of the home, and of the relationship of men and women.

Throughout the nineteenth century even the most advanced men generally returned to unchanged homes, where the senior woman of the family held her secular sway over the domestic economy of the household, performed the traditional ceremonies, and taught the traditional culture. Her husband could not discuss with her the affairs of his daily life outside the household, for she knew nothing of his external contacts, had never travelled, perhaps had scarcely crossed her own threshold, and did not read books and newspapers. His life was cut into two completely separated halves, outside and inside the home.

To-day in the progressive strata of society all that is changing. A wife may meet and entertain her husband's friends, and he sees hers face to face. She can read the news of the world, and may be playing her part in shaping modern India. She may be a member of an Indian Parliament, a magistrate, a member of a local board or municipality, or an organizer of philanthropic work. She is no longer 'cabined, cribbed, confined' in the details of the zenana. She may even have suffered the hardships and humiliations of prison life for a cause in which she believes as ardently as her husband. A single instance may be given of the revolution that has taken place in many an Indian home. A certain young man, emancipated himself but belonging to an orthodox family, was married by his mother's wish to a purdah girl whose face he had never seen. Though he would have liked to introduce her to his friends, respect for family tradition made this impossible. Then came the nationalist movement, and Mahatma Gandhi's call to the women of India. In 1930, eleven years after their marriage, X's friend called and found the husband returning home, after a hard day's work, to feed and wash the babies of the family because his wife, mother, and sister were all serving sentences in prison as conscientious objectors to government action. Women of this calibre, courageous in the extreme, of whom it may be said that nothing in their purdah life became them like the leaving of it, are found all over India to-day. They 'hold a promise for the race that was not' even twenty years ago.

So much for the educated women to whom world movements and nationalist claims have brought release from the Hindu ideal of women's subordination to men.

A parallel revolution has taken place in women's attitude to the burden of pain. For centuries it seemed to follow as the night the day that girls should marry and bear children, at an age when their bodies were too immature for the strain imposed on them; that they should watch their infants die in countless thousands, and



themselves sink into lassitude and invalidism. To-day Indian women realize that mother and child have a better chance of survival when nature and western science are given a fair chance of producing healthy offspring. Nothing is more remarkable in the recent history of women's advance in India than the extent to which even ignorant women flock into hospitals for the birth of their children, wherever hospitals are available. They are still uncertain of the value of schools; they are absolutely convinced of the value of hospitals. To the outsider it would seem a far easier break with tradition for a small girl to go to school than for a woman to leave her home and friends and accustomed surroundings for the most important event of her life. But Indian women are eager and willing to take this bold step. It has been estimated that 70 per cent. of childbirths in Bombay take place in hospitals and 40 per cent. in Delhi, and it is known that far more women would be confined in hospitals were accommodation available.

This particular reaction to western science shows how profoundly the West has disturbed the tenor of domestic life in its most intimate phase. Of course men, too, have gone to hospitals for their ailments and to prison for their convictions. But for men it did not entail anything like the same break with a deep instinct for privacy and with the inviolabilities of home life. They were not at such times thrown for the first time into contact with an alien world, and had not the same barrier of shyness and pride to overcome.

To these two revolutions in Indian thought must be added a third, which was less voluntary and more enforced on women by external pressure. This was the revolutionary change which took place when women engaged in agriculture or small village industries entered the strange environment of towns and of factory life. It is less important than the other two but must also be considered.

Though Indian factory workers are a small proportion of the men so engaged and never belonged to the secluded castes, yet life in an industrial town, side by side with men outside their own families, meant a complete break with tradition. In the fields they may have worked as hard, but it was alongside their fathers and husbands, and they returned in the evening to old friends and familiar surroundings. They enjoyed such privacy and family life as their village huts provided. The mill-hand, however, may too often find no accommodation except in crowded tenements, in which there is no privacy, often not even a separate room for husband and wife. Just after the War, when Bombay reached its peak in congestion, as many as six or eight families were

occasionally found huddled into a single room. Often four families inhabited a room 16 by 14 feet, each family taking one corner of the miserable abode for its family hearth. Peaceful waiting on the succession of the seasons, the enforced leisure of the months when the crops were off the ground were at an end; quiet nights and early gossip round the well ceased to be a part of life. Machines had to be tended in fair or foul weather. No doubt the pull of the countryside and of their ancestral life often proved too strong for factory hands. Employers complained that labour was too fluctuating and intermittent to become really skilled. But even intermittent life in a factory spelt a complete break with the passive acceptance of things as they were. No matter how repellent town life may be to a villager, it compels a fresh outlook, a readjustment of standards. In as far as the industrialization of India has drawn women within its bonds, it must be reckoned as the third link joining East and West.

An entirely new conception of women's worth, a challenge to remediable suffering, and an enforced adaptation to changing economic conditions, these three are the main results of the impact of the West on Indian women.

#### CHALLENGE TO SOCIAL CUSTOMS

In historic times the foundations of Indian society have been shaken by three major upheavals affecting the status of women: by Buddhism beginning in the sixth century B.C., by Muslim invasions in the eleventh and succeeding centuries, and by western civilization in the nineteenth century. And the greatest of these was the last.

Though Buddhism, like other monastic religions, held women in low esteem, the Buddha admitted women to his orders. They became nuns in great numbers and pursued the search for enlightenment, so reasserting their dignity in the religious sphere; but in this sphere only. No refreshing streams flowed back into the life of women in their homes, and, as the centuries passed, the Brahmanical code gripped them ever more tightly.

In spite of the more democratic social system of Islam, in which women enjoyed many privileges denied to Hindus, especially as regards the holding of property in their own right, the Muslim invasions affected the status of women adversely, since fear of the invaders and of forcible conversion to the conquerors' faith tightened the bonds in which women were held. Except in the south of India, where large tracts were never touched by the invaders, and purdah never became widely spread, the women's quarters became still more impenetrable, and seclusion of women extended from higher to lower grades of society.



The impact of western civilization differed from the two preceding upheavals in being more sudden, alien, and fundamentally disturbing than the slow penetration of Buddhist and Muslim ideas. On the material side it shook India out of her long sleep by offering improved communications and opportunities for travel, of which even women could make use, if only to go on pilgrimages, since the country was peaceful and roads and railways were safe. In the realm of ideas the West offered schools, a common language for the emancipated, and standards of freedom with which Indian women could compare their own conditions. In the twentieth century alone much more drastic changes have taken place in the status of Indian women than in the long centuries of Buddhist and Muslim domination.

The searchlight of this alien civilization inevitably threw into relief features of Indian life which for centuries had escaped critical observation. Suttee, for instance, was a conspicuous act which the East India Company, in spite of its reluctance to interfere with Hindu customs, could and did openly challenge and make illegal with the support of many Indians who had been imbued with western ideas. Infanticide was a far more insidious threat to the female population, and one from which girl-infants can only be protected when the birth of a daughter ceases to be an embarrassment to indigent parents. The measures taken to suppress the first and mitigate the second of these practices are mentioned in Chapters II and X.

Other social customs to which India saw no objection before the infiltration of western ideas were purdah, child-marriage, the ban on widow-remarriage, polygamy, and temple prostitution. Purdah is much more strictly observed in North than in South India, where it has never affected the majority of women. It is not possible to give statistics about its incidence at different periods, but it is plain that royal houses and the wealthy families who imitated them secluded their women in very early days; that there was a great increase of the custom during the troubled period of Muslim invasions, but no corresponding decrease after they were over and the country had settled down again. So much general distrust of women is expressed in Hindu law that the purdah was evidently a way of life congenial to Hindu thought. Possibly forty million women were in purdah at the close of the eighteenth century, and the number cannot be very different to-day, for it is true that, though the more enlightened women are laying aside the veil, other women are voluntarily adopting it.

It is clear that very many Indian women do not resent their life of seclusion. They either cling to it through ingrained custom and timidity, or adopt it from a feeling that it adds to their social

prestige. In many high castes it is a matter of bounden duty, which it would take great courage to defy. So that in spite of the crusade which progressive Indian women are waging against it, and the example of high-born ladies such as H.H. the Maharani of Baroda and Their Highnesses the Begums of Bhopal, it cannot be said that rapid progress in its extinction is being made.

To western minds the main argument against purdah is that it leads to starvation of the body and starvation of the mind. Indian women are just beginning to realize that the lack of fresh air and sunlight, from which secluded women suffer, is directly responsible for phthisis, 'osteomalacia, gross pelvic deformity, and the deaths of thousands of mothers and children in child-birth'.<sup>1</sup> When the zenana recognizes purdah as the menace to infant life which doctors know it to be, its knell will have sounded.

That it also threatens starvation of the mind is not so obvious, but leading Indian women admit this. As H.H. the Maharani of Baroda said to the All-India Women's Educational Conference in 1927: 'If women are to take their part in the raising of the tone of social life, if they are to understand the duties and responsibilities for which their sons must be trained, the purdah must go. If women are to have that freedom of mind and variety of interests without which there can be no joyous life, the purdah must go.' A comparison of their own restricted life with the freedom enjoyed by western women has had a tonic effect on Indian women, who realize that they are being partly wasted while they remain in seclusion, and that it is their duty to lay aside the veil in order to build a mentally and physically healthier India.

The idea that a Hindu father is in duty bound to marry his daughter at a very early age dates back to before the Christian era, and is so deeply implanted that it has yielded with great reluctance to the western idea that girls should be physically and mentally ready for matrimony before the ceremony takes place. In many castes a father who fails to have his daughter married before or at puberty is so flagrantly denying his religious duty that he meets with general opprobrium. Pandita Ramabai relates that her family was on the verge of being outcasted because her father, a Brahman, had an unmarried daughter of nine years of age.

The first legislative step, taken in 1860, dealt with the age of consent and of consummation and not with the marriage ceremony, and was largely due to the action of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, who had four years earlier made possible the legal remarriage of widows. The Act of 1860 raised the age of consent for married and unmarried girls to ten, but seems to have had no effect as, at any rate

<sup>1</sup> Dr. K. Vaughan, *The Purdah System and its Effects on Motherhood* (1928), p. 38.



in the case of married girls, it proved quite unenforceable. Thirty years later B. M. Malabari, a Parsi journalist and author, entered the lists and roused furious opposition by a pamphlet on *Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood*. In spite of the opposition, government did, however, pass an Act in 1891, raising the age of consent for girls to twelve, and another in 1925, raising it to thirteen for married and fourteen for unmarried girls.

Unfortunately even these mild measures of protection seem to have been in advance of public opinion, and when next the question of raising the age of consent and marriage came up for public consideration, in 1928, the Age of Consent Committee, appointed by government to investigate the existing state of affairs, found that even the existence of the law on the subject was 'practically unknown throughout the country. A knowledge of it is confined to judges, lawyers, and a few educated men.'<sup>1</sup> It is clear that the later law, like that of 1860, was more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

The same Committee (generally known from the name of its chairman as the Joshi Committee), after an exhaustive examination into the extent of child-marriage and its consequences in early maternity, gave it as their verdict that:

'Early maternity is an evil, and an evil of great magnitude. It contributes very largely to maternal and infant mortality, in many cases wrecks the physical system of the girl, and generally leads to degeneracy in the physique of the race. Let us compare the case of *Sati*, which was prevented by legislation, with the case of early marriage. *Satis* were few and far between. They compelled attention by the enormity of the evil in individual cases, by the intense agony of the burning widow and the terrible shock they gave to humane feelings. But, after all, they were cases of individual suffering; the agony ended with the martyr. . . . In the case of early maternity, however, the evil is widespread and affects such a large number of women, both among Hindus and Moslems, as to necessitate redress. It is so extensive as to affect the whole framework of society. After going through the ordeal, if a woman survives to the age of thirty, she is in many cases an old woman, almost a shadow of her former self. Her life is a long, lingering misery and she is a sacrifice at the altar of custom.'<sup>2</sup>

The publication of the Committee's Report made possible the passage of the Child Marriage Restraint Act (1929), introduced as a Bill by Rai Sahib Harbilas Sarda in 1927. Public opinion, even before the magnitude of the evil had been exposed by the Committee's report, had been rapidly ripening in favour of the Bill among the better educated women of India, and it was largely due to their India-wide agitation that it was placed on the statute book.

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Age of Consent Committee* (1929), p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

Intense satisfaction was expressed that this long overdue reform had at last been carried. The marriage age was raised to fourteen for girls and eighteen for boys, and it looked for a moment as if a brighter day had dawned for the child-brides of India.

It is heart-breaking to have to record that, in spite of certain gains, the Act has largely proved a dead letter. Those sections of society which already desired a prolongation of girlhood and education for girls have found it useful, and the length of the school years has certainly been increased for many hundreds of girls, but the inherent weaknesses of the Act, the trifling fines exacted for ignoring it, and the insuperable reluctance of the average parent to face the social opprobrium and priestly condemnation meted out to the parents of unmarried girls have made the passing of the Act a mockery. But the enlightened women of India are irrevocably pledged to its amendment and enforcement, and will never rest till marriages of girls under fourteen become impossible.

The remarriage of Hindu widows is a major problem in India for two reasons: first, because it concerns some nineteen million women; and, secondly, because their lot is known to be a very unhappy one. When children are married in infancy or early childhood there is a very long period in which a girl may become a widow. The husband may die cutting his first teeth. Occasionally he dies of old age waiting for his bride to grow. Hindus as well as Europeans have spoken with great pity of the childless widow's lot. If a widow has a son, all is well; but if she is childless, though she may be loved and befriended occasionally, in the vast majority of cases she is helpless, despised, cut off from all the pleasures of life, without rights other than that of maintenance in her father-in-law's house, and actually held guilty, through sins committed in a former existence, for her husband's death.

The dangers, hopelessness, and helplessness of Hindu widows profoundly moved the hearts of the first European women to enter the zenana, and during the last hundred years increasing efforts have been made, at first by westerners, later also by Indians, to brighten their lot. The first Indian champion was Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, whose courageous agitation resulted in the passing of an Act in 1856 legalizing the remarriage of widows. About 1870 a crusade in the Bombay Presidency was carried on, which strove to make the marriage of widows a reality, and the names of B. M. Malabari, Mr. Justice Ranade, Professor Karve, and Mr. K. Natarajan deserve honourable mention for their courageous championing of widow-remarriage. In Bengal practical pioneer work was done by Sasipada Banerji as mentioned on p. 456. All the reformed sects made widow-remarriage a plank in their platforms, and homes for the training of widows to equip them for



a life of service to the community have sprung up in many parts of India.

Yet the movement languishes, and the idea of a widow, even of a child-widow, remarrying is still extremely repugnant to Hindu thought. It is no doubt inevitable that a custom so deeply rooted in religious and social thought, and adhered to in high caste strata of society for two thousand years, should yield very slowly to the humaner outlook of the present day. The slow rise of the marriage age will decrease the number of widows, and a more enlightened public opinion, by exonerating them from responsibility for the death of their husbands, will lessen the dislike and opprobrium which are now their portion. To-day the stigma attached to widowhood is less than it was and the ministrations of widows as teachers, nurses, or social workers are no longer looked at askance even in orthodox circles.

Polygamy is allowed both by Hindu and Muslim law, but is little practised, except in a few ruling houses and among a small section of wealthy families. Few men can afford to keep more than one wife, and those who might wish to do so are debarred by the social condemnation which they would to-day incur. Hindu law does not limit the number of a man's wives, but this is of theoretical rather than of practical importance, as no husband takes a second wife, except in very rare cases, e.g. when the first wife has not borne a son. Though Muhammad allowed a man four wives, Muslims to-day argue that the condition he attached to taking more than one, i.e. that all should be treated with perfect impartiality, was really intended to make plurality of wives impossible. Though Indian history and literature teem with stories of the quarrels and intrigues of rival wives, and sometimes tell of their mutual love and forbearance, the social effects of polygamy are negligible in India to-day.

*Devadasis* are in theory a profession of holy women dedicated to the service of some god, to whom they are united in symbolic marriage and before whom it is their duty to sing and dance. They are found mainly in the south of India and may belong either to an hereditary caste of women dedicated in infancy to temple service, or to some other caste, such as the weavers whose practice it was to make a gift of their first-born girl to the temples. They lately numbered over two hundred thousand<sup>1</sup> in Madras, and though their skill in dancing and singing, like that of the nautch girls of northern India (who are not attached to the temples), may have done something to keep alive those arts, the fact that the *devadasis* were known to be prostitutes, actually degraded the arts they practised and made them distasteful to respectable women.

<sup>1</sup> Manifesto of the Devadasi Association (Madras, 1927), p. 8.

It is only of late years, and largely through the efforts of Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi, late Deputy President of the Madras Legislative Council, that steps have been taken for their relief. By an Act, passed in 1925, which extended to them sections of the Penal Code which made traffic in minors a criminal offence, Dr. Reddi sought to make their dedication as minors illegal. But it was found impossible to enforce the Act, as Dr. Reddi herself witnesses,<sup>1</sup> and her second method of attack was to prevent the forfeiture of lands belonging to *devadasis* who refused service in the temples. The leaders among Indian women are determined to fight the cause of the *devadasis* till they are all released, and their efforts have had some response from the *devadasis* themselves, accomplished women of whom some eagerly desire to be restored to the normal life of the community and readily join in rescue work.<sup>2</sup>

If in the preceding paragraphs only the unhappier circumstances of an Indian woman's life have been touched on, that is only because neither Indians nor westerners could have wished to change what was happy, and at all costs to be preserved, in the life of Indian women—their devotion to husband and children, their reverence for religion, their appreciation of Indian culture. The impact of the West revealed both the bright and the dark side of Indian women's lives. The westerners were moved to action only where action seemed imperative, as in the case of suttee and infanticide, or desirable, as in the case of education. The result is that, in describing interactions of West and East, most of the space is necessarily given to the changes that took place and not to the permanent and satisfactory aspect of women's lives.

#### EDUCATION

The idea that girls should receive education outside their own homes had never found a place in Indian life. It was taken for granted—and the same was true of England at the beginning of the nineteenth century—that girls could acquire all that was necessary in the way of education in their home surroundings. Scarcely any education was provided for girls outside their own homes, and if some princely houses, notably that of Akbar, produced scholar-princesses of real eminence in several succeeding generations, their high attainments seemed as much a princely prerogative as their high birth.

When Lord William Bentinck deputed William Adam in 1835 to inquire into the state of indigenous schools, he found a number of boys' schools both of scholastic and vocational types, but no girls' schools of any kind in the areas surveyed.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Key of Progress* (1932), p. 182.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 179.

<sup>3</sup> For an exception to this statement and for facts about the Punjab, see p. 686.



'In fact,' wrote William Adam, 'a feeling is alleged to exist in the majority of Hindu females, principally cherished by the women and not discouraged by the men, that a girl taught to write and read will soon after marriage become a widow . . . and the belief is also generally entertained that intrigue is facilitated by a knowledge of letters on the part of females. . . . The Mohammedans participate in all the prejudices of the Hindus against the instruction of their female offspring.'<sup>1</sup>

If this was the state of affairs, Lord William Bentinck, Thomas Babington Macaulay, and all who, in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, were thinking out the problems of boys' education, were only following the line of least resistance in ignoring the female half of the population; and half a century later the famous cliché was still true that 'girls' education in India is carried out in response to a demand that does not exist'.

Western missionaries were, however, of another way of thinking. As a staunch advocate of self-government for India, Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi, said, in an address to the All-India Women's Conference:

'I honestly believe that missionaries have done more for women's education in this country than government itself. The woman population of this country has been placed under a deep debt of gratitude to the several missionary agencies for their valuable contribution to the educational uplift of Indian women. I honestly think that they have done more for women's education in this country than the government itself. Of course at present India can boast of several other religious bodies such as the Brahmo Samaj, the Ramakrishna Mission, Arya Samaj, &c., doing work in the field of women's education, but in the past the Christian missionaries were the only agencies in that field. . . . Had it not been for these noble bands of Christian women teachers, who are the product of the missionary training schools, even this much advancement in the education of the Indian women would not have been possible; even at this day, in every province, we find the missionary women teachers working hard in a spirit of love and faith, in out-of-the-way villages, where the Hindu and Muslim women dare not penetrate.'

Even in 1823 missionary work was by no means negligible, if we may judge from the fact that the Church of England Missionary Society alone ran twenty-three girls' schools (with about 500 pupils) in Calcutta and its neighbourhood, where they outnumbered the Anglican boys' schools. All were due to the enterprise of a Mrs. Wilson (Miss Cooke), the wife of one of the missionaries. Mission schools were attended only by girls of the lower classes, and nothing was done for their social superiors till 1849, when Drinkwater Bethune founded a school in Calcutta for the

<sup>1</sup> J. Long, *Adam's Reports on Vernacular Education in Bengal and Behar* (1868), p. 132.

daughters of Indians of wealth and rank. So little support did it receive at first that it was in danger of collapse on Bethune's death in 1851. It was saved by Lord Dalhousie, who financed it out of his own pocket until 1856, after which it was taken over by the government and developed into a college, the Bethune College. This was the first institution for the higher education of women, and its foundation is therefore regarded by Indians as a landmark in the history of women's education. In South India missions were the pioneers of higher education, the first university college, the first medical school, and the first training college for women being established under their auspices; and the Indian Bishop of Dornakal rightly points out that Christians were everywhere the first to break the shackles in which women were bound and set them free to know and understand the world.<sup>1</sup>

The first Indians to take an active interest in women's education were not unnaturally the most Europeanized communities in India—the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal and the Parsis in Bombay. One of the greatest members of the former, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, working in an official capacity as Inspector of Schools, established over forty girls' schools between 1855 and 1858. Beginning in 1864, several periodicals were published by various other members of the Samaj with the object of promoting women's education. One was started by two Bengali ladies, another was long edited by ladies of the Tagore family. A third was expressly designed for the benefit of purdah ladies by its founder Sasipada Banerji, who in 1877 opened a Hindu widows' home, the first Hindu foundation of the kind. Here girl widows were trained as teachers and taught domestic science and cottage industries, his idea being, as stated by his son, that, unpopular as the cause of widow-remarriage was, compassion and sympathy could be won, if widows were brought under a scheme of suitable education, leaving the remarriage question in the background.<sup>2</sup> He himself arranged for the remarriage of thirty-seven widows.

In regard to the social status and education of women, as in other respects, the Parsis were foremost among Indian communities in reacting to western ideas. From 1860 they eagerly welcomed English education and showed their sincerity in the cause of girls' education by building and equipping schools with their own money. In 1913, out of ten high schools for girls in Bombay, eight were being run by Parsis. Calcutta had at the same date two (Brahmo) high schools and Madras none. Other communities have since made up the leeway, but Indians in western

<sup>1</sup> Rt. Rev. V. S. Azariah, "The Christian Contribution to India", *Indian Review* (Madras, 1938), p. 805.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Albion Banerji, *An Indian Pathfinder*, p. 83.



India were in the earliest stages greatly indebted to the Parsis for the courageous lead given in adapting western to eastern standards.

Before the end of the nineteenth century two more beacon lights were shedding their beams over the dark, untroubled waters of girls' illiteracy. One, since it was lit by an Indian Christian, might perhaps come under the heading of missionary effort, but, as she was also a learned Brahmani Pandita Ramabai's achievement can best be considered along with those of other Indian pioneers and 'rare individuals' of the nineteenth century.

Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922) belonged to the great succession of India's learned women. At eight years of age she was learning Sanskrit, and in her teens expounded the Puranas and Upanishads. But, in spite of her strong inherited bent to Sanskrit learning, Ramabai was a product of the nineteenth century and did not escape the influence of the West. Late in life for an Indian, at the age of twenty, she married, and when two years later her husband died, she determined to go to England, and published a book in order to obtain the necessary money for her journey. From this time onward her life was moulded by western influences. She formed a lifelong friendship with Miss Beale, of Cheltenham Ladies' College (where she was appointed instructress in Sanskrit), and with many other advanced reformers in England and America, and she became a Christian. In her ability to take what was best out of two civilizations, and to unite Hindu love of learning with Christian love of service, she had no equal. The immense capacity for acquiring knowledge which so impressed the pandits of India, she later in life harnessed to an immense capacity for helping the needy. She built up in Poona a home for Hindu widows which was also, as far as might be, a home of Sanskrit learning. At times it housed as many as 2,000 widows. Her faith was equal to that of Dr. Barnardo, her resources far more precarious, for her apostasy had alienated all her Brahman friends. She was typically Indian and typically Christian. In her the West and East attained a rare synthesis.

Before the end of the nineteenth century a second light showed that the tide was beginning to run in a contrary direction. In 1889 Professor Karve of Poona also started a school for Hindu widows, which later (1916) developed into the Indian Women's University. This institution is unique not only in that, in spite of its handful of students, it boldly claimed to be a university, but also in its insistence that as women have a different function to perform in life from men, they must therefore be educated in a different way. Dr. Karve also held the view that Indian women are more truly educated and more serviceable to their own country, if they do their hardest thinking in the language of their motherland. In

this few educationalists will differ from Dr. Karve, whatever concessions to expediency they may be obliged to make in teaching English, and his plea for the vernaculars up to the degree standard is gaining ground.

The soundness of Dr. Karve's pioneer work is increasingly recognized. He has now 170 undergraduates in four colleges, instead of the half-dozen girls of twenty years ago. In a sense he has reacted to western ideas of education more profoundly than those who merely imitated the West, because he has ploughed a lone furrow in courageous opposition to current ideas. Whether India will eventually concede his other claim that women should be educated, even in the most advanced stages, on different lines from men is still a moot point. The problem will have to be worked out in the light of India's peculiar circumstances, her preponderance of males, Indian ideas regarding the inevitability of marriage for all girls, and the high capacity shown by isolated Indian women for speculative thought.

It may seem invidious to have selected only two out of the many conspicuous experiments in girls' education which marked the turn of the century, since many other men and women—to name only Mrs. R. Ranade and Mrs. Sorabji of Poona, Lady Bose of Calcutta, and Miss Bose of Lahore—devoted their whole lives to this cause. But Pandita Ramabai and Dr. Karve have been selected because the first so whole-heartedly adopted the Christian idea of women's equal claim with men to pursue knowledge and religious experience, and because the second, at a date when imitation of the West was everywhere prevalent, boldly set himself to indianize girls' education.

To-day the importance of girls' education has been in theory everywhere conceded even by Muslims, who throughout the nineteenth century proudly disdained any attempt by government to educate their daughters in spite of the efforts of Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan and others to remove the prejudice against the education of women. On many platforms and in numerous closely reasoned reports it is said to be not merely of equal but of paramount importance. It is acclaimed as 'the Key of Progress', 'pivotal for national advance', and so on. As the Rani of Sangli put it, speaking to the All-India Women's Conference in 1927: 'There was a time when the education of girls had not only no supporters, but open enemies in India. Female education has by now gone through all the stages—total apathy, ridicule, criticism, and acceptance. It may now be safely stated that anywhere in India the need for the education of girls as much as of boys is recognized as a cardinal need, the *sine qua non* of national progress.' Women from end to



end of India are proclaiming with fire and enthusiasm that in the desire and capacity for acquiring knowledge girls are not different from boys, and that they will no longer be 'content with the leavings while men enjoy the feast'. They repudiate the idea expressed by a character in one of Rabindranath Tagore's novels, that 'the whole world is open to men. For man the open air, the beauties of nature, the health of travel; for woman a corner of the home, the side of the sick bed, at best a peep through the window.'<sup>1</sup>

But the unanimity of the chorus in favour of education for girls must not blind us to the fact that in respect of primary schools, education is still more an aspiration than an accomplished fact, and that the number of girls attending school, though it is steadily rising, mounts very slowly. In 1917, 1,230,000 girls attended school; in 1937, 2,890,000. In 1937 while 50 per cent. of boys between the age of six and seven were attending school, only 16 per cent. of girls were doing so, and in some provinces, e.g. the United Provinces and Bihar, only 6 per cent. While male literacy at the date of the last census (1931) stood at 16 per cent., the female literacy was still under 3 per cent., figures which prove what a long row has still to be hoed. The real test of enthusiasm for girls' education comes when government, municipalities, and local boards are asked to divert some of their always inadequate funds from boys' to girls' schools, and figures of expenditure show what a gulf yawns between platform speeches and their translation into rupees.

A very different picture meets the eye when we turn to the higher education of women. Here apathy, ridicule, and hostility have vanished from the scene. The progress made during the twentieth century has in the universities been very remarkable. In 1935 over 5,000 women were studying for degrees, of whom 460 graduated. In 1926 the All-India Women's Conference, not content with passing resolutions, determined to raise money and start a college to be entirely staffed and managed by women. The Delhi Lady Irwin College for Educational Research, Home Science, and the Training of Teachers has as its aim the re-modelling of girls' education on lines more suited to the needs of Indian life, and the reorientation of girls' schools so as to relate them more closely to Indian traditions and ideals. The college has prospered, and is an outstanding proof of Indian women's determination to help themselves and to end their long subservience to the West, by creating something truly Indian. The college is young, and it is too soon to say how India will adapt women's education to the peculiar social conditions of a country where

<sup>1</sup> *Virva-Bharata Quarterly* (Santiniketan, Bengal, Nov. 1937).

women are in a minority, marry almost inevitably and very young, live mainly in villages, are intensely home-keeping and deeply religious. But the founders are aware of the problems confronting them and have taken to heart 'the lesson of the indiscriminate and unplanned quantitative education of boys'.

There is even a school of thought that rejoices that girls so largely escaped the period of western domination and the blight that overtook schools where the medium was a foreign language and the curriculum was little concerned with Indian religions or culture. It is argued that since girls' education is still in embryo, it can be shaped nearer to the heart's desire of women acutely conscious of their Indian heritage and of the demands of a self-governing nation. At the moment India's educational ideas are in a ferment. Everything is in the melting-pot; the paramountcy of English, the claims of rural against urban, of primary against secondary, the expenditure on girls versus boys are all being fiercely debated.

The infiltration of western ideas on the right of girls to be educated was a challenge to Indian apathy. As we have seen, the idea of State education for girls was so alien to Indian thought that for many decades it made scarcely any advance, and would have made still less but for pressure from Christian missionaries. For a long time the sun climbed 'slow, how slowly', but it is now strongly ascendant. To-day imitation has given place to criticism, and sometimes to repudiation, of western ideas, and many experiments will be needed to find out where, if anywhere, what has been described as 'literacy of the spirit' differs in India from spiritual literacy in the West.

#### RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

Since Hinduism is the most assimilative of religions, with an unsurpassed capacity for subtle rehabilitation under extraneous contacts, it was to be expected that it would accept, or reshape to its own pattern, much that it saw to be worthy of imitation in the Christian attitude towards women. Just here is to be found the kernel of the fruit of western and eastern interactions. In as far as modern religious reform movements have shown willingness to accept women as partners in the search for truth and not mere passive guardians of tradition, the seed may be said to have fallen on good ground and to have become a vital force.

This is, in fact, what has taken place. The Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Ramakrishna Mission, and, more recently, Muslim movements, such as the Jamia Milliyya Islamia, have all tacitly accepted the status of Christian women as the criterion to which other religions must conform. This is the standard by



which non-Christian religions are tried. 'What is deemed up to standard is emphasized, brought into prominence, and henceforth secures a lease of vigorous life. What is felt to be not in consonance with this test is allowed to recede and is doomed to a silent grave in convenient oblivion.'<sup>1</sup> As a member of the Legislative Assembly put it, in the debate on Child Marriage Restraint, in 1928, 'If the *Shastras* and later marriage are incompatible, then the *Shastras* must go.' The House agreed with him. The Koran also is being interpreted more liberally and less literally, and traditional views are being given up. It may even be that, as the arbiter of women's status, it eventually will have to stand down in India as it has already done in Turkey, though Indian Muslims cling to their Holy Book with greater tenacity than do Muslims in independent Turkey.

Women's place in every religious community in India has been profoundly modified. The ferment of the new ideas seeping into India threw up one religious reformer after another, all of whom claimed a new importance for women in the societies they founded. Raja Ram Mohan Ray (1774-1833), the first and perhaps the most remarkable of the reformers, stands somewhat apart from the rest, since his life was dedicated to reinterpreting Hinduism and to founding a new order, besides abolishing one particular evil, suttee. In the catholicity of his outlook and his determination to serve the women of his country he was, especially at so early a date in the interaction of West and East, an outstanding example of the infusion of new ideas. He tore aside the veil of religious glamour which made of suttee 'the highest peak of Rama-Sita devotion, the ultimate test of a lofty belief in eternal soul affinity, a terribly beautiful proof of matchhood through life and after death'.<sup>2</sup> He and the missionaries who worked with him pointed out that though the self-immolation of the widow might be all this, as it was in the case of the five hundred noble widows of Chitor, more often the widow was coerced or drugged into acceptance of her cruel fate. The idea of fidelity beyond life was far less beautiful, if it never applied to the husband, who could and did remarry immediately. And so suttee, after a generation of struggle, disappeared, or at any rate became illegal, in 1829, and this first remarkable blow struck for women against Brahman domination was followed, though only after an interval of nearly thirty years, by an Act legalizing the remarriage of widows.

Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-84), third in succession to Ram Mohan Ray as leader of the Brahmo Samaj, was able to carry the work of adapting western standards to Indian religion much

<sup>1</sup> K. T. Paul, *The British Connection with India* (1927), p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> F. Haunwirth, *Purdah* (1932), p. 74.

farther. He believed not only in the education of girls, in practical philanthropy, widow-remarriage, and monogamous unions at an age when the girl could understand her marriage vows, but also in women's complete equality with men in the religious sphere as teachers of truth.

Though the next reforming religious movement, that of the Arya Samaj, founded by Dayanand Saraswati (1827-83), took shape as a revolt from western thought, and sought to prevent young people from falling under western influence, yet this movement too adopted an entirely new attitude towards women, and has been a powerful force in promoting their education. It, too, recognized that a facile acceptance of feminine ignorance and subordination to men was not consonant with the endeavour to rehabilitate Hinduism. The reformers might ignore the electric current; it had nevertheless made the running of their own engine possible.

If the Brahmo Samaj arose out of admiration for Christianity and the Arya Samaj as a protest against it, the third great movement of reform, the Ramakrishna Mission, is more serenely based neither on imitation nor on condemnation. The pendulum, which had swung violently to left and then to right, now found equilibrium in acceptance of the riches of both Hindu and Christian thought. Long before the death of the second leader, Swami Vivekananda, in 1902, the movement frankly imitated the Christian technique of schools, medical and preaching missionaries, the training of widows, and so on. This was the more remarkable because India had her own technique of priestly seminaries, *sadhus*, dancing ecstasies, monks, and so on. Women take an honoured place in the Ramakrishna Mission as teachers and preachers. Ramakrishna himself sat for many years at the feet of a devout nun. Vivekananda owed a great deal to his ardent woman disciple Sister Nivedita, an Englishwoman, who as completely adopted his teaching as St. Clare did that of St. Francis.

The numerous smaller reformed sects which have come into being during the last seventy years have all fallen into line with those already named in giving women an active, not merely a passive, part to play in religion.

#### CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

The part played by Christian missions in interpreting the West to India is so important that it must be reviewed under a separate heading.

It has already been said that the East India Company and, later, government showed little enthusiasm for the education of girls. It was the Christian missionaries who first realized that no stable,



and certainly no Christian, community could be built up under conditions where women were incompetent to teach the young and heal the sick. It was of the first importance that women should be able to read the Bible and give reasons for the faith they held. When they had read it, an urge to serve the community was widely felt by the more vigorous among Christian women. So it came about that the three major needs of Indian women, for teachers, doctors, and nurses, were met at first almost entirely by Christian women. To-day, when Hindu girls are crowding into medical and normal schools, it is just to remember that nearly all the pioneer work was done by Indian Christians. Even to-day the small Christian community of less than seven millions supplies nearly half the students in medical and normal schools. In 1937 there were 417 Christians out of 891 students in medical schools, and 3,255 Christians out of 7,212 students in normal training schools. In 1927 five of the seven normal training colleges were run by missionaries, and 98 out of the 115 students were Christians. If a career for women is still at the experimental stage and has not received the backing of public support, it is still the Christians who must blaze the trail; e.g. in 1937, 49 out of 53 students in agricultural, and 274 out of 341 in commercial schools, were Christians.

It is here only possible to give in briefest outline the methods by which Christian ideas of women's importance as individuals or as servants of the community penetrated into India.

Though from an earlier date many wives of missionaries had done good service, and societies had been formed as early as 1834 and 1837 in England and Scotland to collect funds to promote female education in India, it was not till the second half of the nineteenth century that single women began to be recruited for service in India, and it was not for another quarter of a century that these rivulets of trained women coalesced into a broad stream. To-day the aggregate of women missionaries serving in India is greater than that of men, and they carry a heavy and growing responsibility for the emancipation of the women of a vast and seething continent.

It would create a very false picture if the impression were given that only Protestant or British missions answered the call of Indian women. Thousands of Roman Catholic nuns are carrying on work which embraces varied activities, from University lectures, such as those given in the Loreto Convent, Calcutta, to the most menial tasks performed for lepers. As a Protestant bishop once said to the writer: 'If a task is too appalling for anyone else, the Catholic nuns will undertake it.' The nuns are greatly liked and trusted by the most retiring of Indian women, to whom their

'purdah' life of renunciation and service makes a strong appeal. Many of these Sisters are Belgian or French, and have formed a bridge between India and France or Belgium for such Indian girls as are able to complete their education in Paris or Brussels. Toru Dutt (1856-77) it may be noted, was as fluent a writer in French as in English, and her first novel was written in French.

German and Danish missions have also provided a channel for the inflow of European ideas; but far more important than any except the British missions has been the constant stream of American missionaries and money. Of the three premier women's colleges in India one, the Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow, is financed by America, and the Women's Christian College, Madras (1916) has been greatly indebted to American women for generous support. The third great women's college, the Kinnaird College, Lahore, is also a missionary college. In fact, throughout the nineteenth century and up to the outbreak of the Great War, though women were admitted more or less on sufferance to men's colleges, anything that was planned generously and specifically to meet the needs of graduate and undergraduate women was due to Christian missions.

This is as true of hospitals as of colleges, and even to-day out of 180 hospitals for women, 96 are Mission hospitals, while 26 are under the All-India Women's Medical Service, and 62 belong to provincial or Indian States' boards. Two out of the three medical colleges are missionary colleges, those of Vellore and Ludhiana. Of the extremely important service rendered to Indian women in the training and supplying of hospital nurses more will be said under the section on Health. Nursing is still almost an entirely Christian profession, which few non-Christians have had the courage to adopt.

It would therefore be difficult to exaggerate the part played by Christian missions in the emancipation of Indian women. To-day Indians are rejoicing in women's wide and spontaneous response to the call for national service, and it is of the happiest augury for a self-governing India that so many of them are able and willing to undertake onerous tasks. But no amount of willingness would have made them competent to undertake professional responsibilities in colleges and hospitals, had not Christian missionaries, in face of apathy and open hostility, steadily and patiently pursued their self-appointed task of emancipation and equipped Indian women for the responsibilities which they to-day are undertaking.

#### WESTERN HEALTH SERVICES

Though Indian women have generally suspected *Danaos et dona ferentes*, they have not rejected such gifts in the field of health.



Their necessity has been too great. In India, where the expectation of life is low for all, and disease seems a normal condition for large numbers of the population, women have even heavier handicaps to carry than men. In addition to the ills afflicting the population generally, women have also to face ills peculiar to women, e.g. a certain reluctance to give girl babies the same care as boys, the undermining of the stamina of girls brought up in purdah, the Juggernaut of early marriage, and premature child-bearing.

To the apathetic and pathetic acceptance of things as they are the West brought a challenge. Slowly it began to dawn on Indian women that some of their suffering was preventable. If a successful battle can be waged against plague and cholera, why not take up the sword against diseases resulting from child-birth and against tuberculosis, which falls so much more heavily on girls than on boys? Millions of Indian women to-day realize that the high death-rate of mothers and babies is not an act of God, to be accepted in anguished resignation, but a remediable wrong done to human bodies and a controllable factor in the building up of a healthy nation. No gift of the West is to-day more eagerly and gratefully welcomed than any attempt to preserve infant life. The belief in doctors and hospitals is more widespread than the belief in teachers and schools. The hospitals bring an immediate and blessed boon, the schools a dubious and evanescent one.

But the present-day acceptance of western science was not brought into being without immense effort, as even the briefest summary of the reaction of women to hospitals and doctors will make plain. 'Patients had to be coaxed and persuaded to come to hospital, and the slightest set-back would be enough to make them run. A death emptied the wards, and an unsuccessful operation would lose all the ground that had been won in years.'<sup>1</sup> Miss Cornelia Sorabji from her experience among *pardahnashin* ladies draws vivid little pictures of the handicaps of men doctors who might neither see nor touch their patients, nor administer liquid medicine, even where powders were not taboo. She tells of a frantic Rani whose extremity induced her to entrust a dying child to an English nurse on the condition that it was washed in Ganges water on every occasion of contact with the mother. A competent observer of North India wrote in 1909: 'Every self-respecting Asiatic has an unconquerable horror of a hospital and all its works.' To a remarkable extent that 'unconquerable horror' has to-day been overcome. Women eagerly seek hospital treatment, and the problem everywhere is how to cope with the long waiting-list of those for whom treatment should but cannot be provided.

The stages through which the availability of western science to

<sup>1</sup> M. Balfour and R. Young, *Work of Medical Women in India* (1929), p. 16.

alleviate the suffering of women passed were: first, a stage of complete indifference, when civil hospitals were open to women, but were unused, since the doctors were men; secondly, a stage when women missionaries began to realize the immensity of the need and to supply women doctors as far as they were available; thirdly, the present-day realization of the immense resources of science and a demand that public money shall make treatment available for women.

The second stage may be said to have opened with the landing in India of the first fully qualified women doctors. These were Miss Clara Swain, an American, who opened the first women's hospital in Bareilly in 1874, and a British woman, Dr. Fanny Butler, who landed in 1880. The Countess of Dufferin Fund for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India (1885) gave a tremendous impetus to the dawning desire for western treatment of disease and focused attention on women's needs. Money was generously supplied in England and India, and an influential group of men and women threw themselves with knowledge and enthusiasm into organizing medical relief for women throughout India. Unfortunately, after the first *élan* had spent itself in the collecting of what should have been a nucleus, but proved to be almost the entire endowment of the scheme, financial stringency crippled its efforts, and the high hopes of the Countess of Dufferin could not be fulfilled for India as a whole, though much valuable work was and is being done.

This partial want of support for one particular fund should not, however, be read as indicating any turning away from western science. During the same period, 1885-1916, mission hospitals spread a network all over India, and as prejudice broke down, they played a more and more important part in drawing the East and West closer together. It would be difficult to exaggerate their effect in proving to Indian women the skill and devotion to their interests of English and American women.

It must not be forgotten, however, that Indian women have shown the greatest courage in responding to a call which they recognized as urgent. The doors of medical schools in England and America had scarcely been opened to women when one or two Indian women applied for admission. In 1886 Mrs. Anandibai Joshi qualified as a doctor in America. Unfortunately the effort had tried her strength, already taxed by child-bearing at the age of thirteen, and she succumbed a year later to tuberculosis almost before her career as a doctor had begun. A similar fate overtook the second Indian doctor, Miss A. Jaganadham of Madras, who qualified in 1892 and died in 1894. But the third to qualify, Dr. Rukmabai (in 1895), was destined to a long career of useful-



ness in India. In 1875 the Medical College of Madras and in 1883 that of Bombay opened their doors to women, and since that date a constant and growing supply of women doctors has been available. The profession of medicine, unlike nursing, has never been looked at askance by Indian parents, nor carried with it any kind of social stigma.

A striking instance of Indian open-mindedness is to be seen in the founding of the Cama Hospital, Bombay, endowed by a Parsi philanthropist as far back as 1882, on the understanding that women only should administer and staff the hospital. The competence of the staff justified the high faith of the founder, immediately won a distinguished place for the hospital, and made history not only for Indian women but for medical women in western lands, where their entrance to the profession was still being very reluctantly conceded. Not only in Bombay, but in India generally, universities, hospitals, and male practitioners have shown a more generous and cordial attitude to women doctors than their corresponding numbers have done in most western countries.

Unfortunately the honour paid to women doctors could not spread its skirt wide enough to cover the sister profession of nursing. Nursing in India is still cold-shouldered. As the League of Nations' Report on Health in 1928 writes:

'For a very long time practically all the Indian nurses who underwent training were Christians, as the profession is not looked on with favour by others. Even when non-Christian girls began to take up medicine or teaching, they did not take up nursing, against which there was a prejudice. This is being only slowly overcome; even now the number of Hindus and Mohamedans in the nursing profession is very small.'

To a degree quite unknown in the West, nursing was considered degrading. Only the example of western women could give Indian girls courage. In this hard profession

'countless English women have served their "grim step-mother" with all the dogged tenacity of their race. In pestilential cities, in mud-walled villages, through good report and ill, through plague, pestilence and famine, through suspicion, opposition and apathy, these indomitable white women have wrought and striven unceasingly.'

Even to-day when the status of nurses has risen a little, and nursing in hospitals is approved, the surmounting of this preliminary foothill has only revealed a vast mountain-range of difficulty lying behind. Where is India to find the army of trained midwives demanded by her eight to ten million annual births, or the army of Health Visitors needed to induce women to ask for at least cleanliness and a modicum of skill from the indigenous *dai*?

<sup>1</sup> M. Diver, *The Englishwoman in India* (1909), p. 118.

It is all to the good that hospitals can now count on a regular supply of nurses, but hospitals can only touch a fringe of the problem. It may be argued that in agricultural communities throughout the ages child-birth has been safely entrusted to the elder women of the community, and should be normal and easy compared to that of women in highly civilized communities. But in India child-bearing is not postponed till the mother's body is fully developed. Traditional religion, as interpreted by its priestly exponents, and social convention step in to say that girls shall marry at puberty, be deprived of fresh air and exercise (if belonging to the secluded classes), and be ceremonially unclean at the hour of birth, and therefore at the mercy of low-caste, ignorant attendants. The Joshi Committee, appointed, as already stated, to report on the prevalence of early marriage, consisted (with the exception of one European doctor) of eight Indians with wide knowledge of conditions in India. Yet the state of affairs revealed far exceeded their worst expectations. Though the facts set down in the nine volumes of evidence make unbearably painful reading, one member testified that 'things are far worse than they are described in the report'. This weighty report marks an epoch. No one can now dispute the facts of 'the relentless story of cruelty and selfishness', or deny the existence of customs 'making for the early death of the mother and child with the silence and depth of a strong tide at night'.

To-day Indian men and women are fully aware that this terrible suffering need not be endured and that the national wastage can be checked. The problem is recognized, but the prospect of tackling it might well daunt the stoutest heart. It has to be made known somehow to 170 million women (of whom over 8 million annually bear children) that cleanliness is necessary at all births and skilled attendance in abnormal cases; and to their male relatives that the maternal mortality of mothers under fifteen years is 50 per cent. higher than that of mothers over fifteen years, that 35-45 per cent. of pregnancies of young mothers show abnormality, while many of the infants, if they survive, are so puny and sickly that they cannot grow into healthy men and women. Above all, it has to be brought home to men and women alike that not mere survival but healthy survival is alone worth while, that no nation can tolerate, either on humanitarian or economic grounds, so crushing a weight of sickly children and prematurely aged wives.

The measures taken to awaken public opinion and combat disabilities peculiar to women belong mainly to the third period of Indian reaction to western ideas about health. In 1916 the two existing missionary schools for medical women, at Ludhiana and



Vellore, were increased to three with the founding of the Lady Hardinge Medical College for Women, Delhi. The important Women's Medical Service for all India was established in 1914.

The third period, from the Great War to the present day, is marked by a great increase in public awareness of women's diseases as preventable and nationally disastrous. Not only have measures to cure sickness through an increased supply of hospitals, doctors, and nurses met with growing support, but much greater stress is beginning to be laid on the prevention of women's diseases, and concerted action is being taken to mitigate social customs which foster ill health. Nothing in recent Indian history was more unexpected and dramatic than the mobilization of women all over India to raise the marriage age, when the Sarda Bill to restrain early marriages was before the Assembly in 1929. Purdah is looked on with growing disfavour, when it becomes a matter of common knowledge that four times as many girls as boys die from tuberculosis. The amount of preventable blindness is enough to make angels weep, and 'the pity of it, the pity of it' is getting through to even the most ignorant mothers and arousing them to eager acceptance of such aid as 'baby weeks', maternity and child welfare centres, or Health Visitors can offer. Most of the child welfare work is still on a voluntary basis (though a few municipalities have undertaken it), and in some cities is carried on with great enthusiasm and efficiency, but the rural areas are still almost untouched. Preventive work is still in its infancy. Public authorities and doctors and hospitals have enough to do coping with the ills they know without flying to others that as yet they know not of. Sufficient unto the day is the suffering thereof. Money is scarce, and the few municipalities which have appointed women to plan preventive work, have, by adding to their task curative duties, inevitably hamstrung the less immediately urgent side of their activities.

In 1918 the first school for training Health Visitors was opened in Delhi, and, since ignorance and unhygienic conditions are the root cause of so much preventable sickness, Health Visitors have an incalculable harvest waiting to be reaped. But the harvesters are few. Only some 60 to 70 in 1936 were under training in 7 Health Schools, and about 300 at work. The Health Visitors' vocation is a peculiarly difficult one for Indian women. It suffers from all the obstacles standing in the way of the solitary village teacher, with the added disadvantage that the Health Visitor has to create her clientele; whereas, in theory at least, the children come voluntarily to be taught, 'Health Visitors must walk alone in the streets, go to the houses of strangers, mix with all sorts and conditions of people, and perform tasks which may be regarded as

menial and degrading. Is it surprising that, in spite of the good rates of pay usually offered to Health Visitors, there is a difficulty in filling the Health Schools with the right kind of people?<sup>1</sup>

The outstanding feature of Indian women's reaction to western medical science has been, especially in the present century, their willingness to co-operate. The urge to create better conditions for mother and infant has come to them from the West. They have learned to trust western methods and western nurses and doctors, and are now eager to learn their ways and walk in their footsteps.

#### WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

Women in industry appear important or infinitesimally unimportant according to the angle from which the observer views them. Of the 170 million women in India less than a quarter of a million work in factories employing more than ten persons, less than half a million work on plantations, a negligible proportion of the whole population. Of the 0.45 per cent of the whole population working in contact with power-driven machinery very few are women. In Bombay and Calcutta 70 per cent. of the factory workers are men. Yet the relatively tiny proportion of women engaged in industry does not alter the fact that the Frankenstein of western industrialism has conjured something strange and new out of the eastern village. For the first time in their history Indian women have had to leave their villages and work apart from their male relations, amid the noise and dust of clanging machinery, and accommodate their waking and sleeping hours to a revolutionary change.

Fortunately for India her industrialization on a wide front only came into being after the West had begun to realize that operatives as well as machines have their rights. If machine production is an accursed octopus, as Mr. Gandhi holds it to be, at least some of its tentacles were severed before it settled down in India. Protective legislation and welfare work have developed almost *pari passu* with the growing demand for labour.

To turn for a moment to pre-British industrial conditions in India, it is clear that women from the earliest times took their share in producing the silks, embroideries, jewels, and condiments so greatly prized by the Greeks and Romans. One of the earliest direct references to them is made by Kautilya (321-296 B.C.), describing what should be the conditions of female labour in an ideal State. He proposes that

'women who do not stir out of their homes, whose husbands are gone abroad, or who are cripples or girls, may, when obliged to work for subsistence, be provided with spinning in due courtesy, through the

<sup>1</sup> M. Balfour and R. Young, *op. cit.*, p. 153.



medium of maid-servants (of the weaving establishments). . . . Those who can present themselves at the weaving house shall at dawn be enabled to exchange their spinnings for wages. . . . The superintendent shall not take advantage of these women or delay paying their wages. The King shall also make provision for these women before and after childbirth.'

The quotation shows that women bore their part in industry from the earliest times, that they worked in their own homes, and had to be guarded against exploitation. Their output was part of the assets of the village, and it consisted either of things needed by the village, thread, cloth, *ghi*, condiments and medicines, or of silks, laces, and embroideries for Court consumption. In any case the woman worked in her own home, under the shelter of the joint-family system, which was responsible for her in sickness and in health, so that questions of housing and unemployment did not arise.

In the eighteen-eighties large-scale foreign industries began to draw a handful of women out of their surroundings to the growing industrial towns, with disruptive effect on home-life. Whether wives migrated with their husbands to the towns, or struggled on without them in the villages, they had to adapt themselves to a new rhythm of life. As an Indian lady, Mrs. K. Chatterjee, writes:

'The Industrial Revolution has caused social readjustments intrinsically alien to the ideals of our civilization and culture, and so has affected working women more fundamentally than men. . . . With this change new problems have arisen both for men and women in industry, and the women have their own particular grievances in addition to the hardships they are sharing with their husbands and fathers.'

It is probable that no Indian woman would work in a factory if she could avoid it. Poor pay, squalid surroundings, a miserable home, and exile from the soil to which every peasant heart clings, all make her lot bitter. Women labourers, usually engaged by forewomen who exploit them, have none of the Lancashire girl's sturdy independence or her pride in mastering a machine. Though they are admitted to trade unions, and have on occasion found spokeswomen to voice their grievances, they are on the whole inarticulate and unorganized and have little power. Such protection as women enjoy has come to them through legislation based on the more enlightened attitude towards labour now common in the West.

The extent to which Indian women benefited by the bitter experience of women and children in the West may be learned by noting a few dates. It is somewhat surprising to find that industry on a large scale was scarcely under way in India when Lord Shaftesbury, the veteran champion of children in England, voiced

<sup>1</sup> K. Chatterjee, *Our Cause* (Allahabad, 1937), p. 129.

Indian children's grievances in the House of Lords in 1877, with the result that the Government of India in 1881 excluded children under seven from factories, and restricted the hours of labour of children aged 7-12 to nine hours a day. This meagre degree of protection was soon felt to be inadequate, and in 1891 the hours of factory work were reduced to seven for children and eleven for women, and they were excluded from night work. In 1911 an Act of greater enlightenment provided a kind of Magna Carta for labour. Since that date various amending Acts and improved administration have further improved the conditions of labour. In 1922 children under twelve were excluded from factories and older children's hours were limited to six, while the hours of men as well as women were limited to eleven a day or sixty in the week. The Act was made applicable to all power factories in which more than twenty persons were engaged, or, if provincial governments so decided, to factories in which over ten persons worked, whether power was employed or not. In 1929 it was enacted that women should gradually be eliminated from underground work in mines.

It is true that women working underground have resented their liquidation, but only because, with no alternative occupation, they and their families are worse off than ever. They say that they must first live, before they can live better. A few firms have provided compensatory occupations, such as paddy-husking, *biri*,<sup>1</sup> soap, and paper-bag making. But as a general rule women, in spite of their low wages, are the first to be dismissed in times of unemployment, because of the protected terms of their employment.

To-day the greatest hardship of women in industry is neither long hours nor underpayment, serious as both these still are, but one which neither protective legislation nor trade unionism can control, and that is bad housing conditions. Industry is carried on 'in islands of industrialism set in the ocean of an almost all-pervading agriculture'.<sup>2</sup> The factories are crowded behind the ports and railway junctions. Bombay city and Ahmadabad city account for 58 per cent. of the cotton mills of the Bombay Presidency. The operatives and their wives must live close to the mill, and decent accommodation was for long non-existent. Overcrowding in dark, unventilated, insanitary rooms, generally shared by several families, becomes the rule of their life. Children are still-born or brought up in appalling conditions. Home-life, privacy, even decency are impossible. Even where land is not so valuable as in Bombay city, and the labourers can live in one-story huts spread over a large surface, as they do round Calcutta, the back-to-back

<sup>1</sup> An Indian cigarette.

<sup>2</sup> S. Reed and P. Cadell, *India: the New Phase* (1928), p. 112.



huts were for many years scarcely an improvement on the Bombay tenements, and though to-day housing of mill hands is engaging the attention of municipalities everywhere, the condition of town labourers still rightly appals the village-bred mill hand, especially if she is the mother of a family.

But we must look for a moment at the silver lining to India's black cloud of industrialization. If contact with the West has brought machinery, and wrenched the village woman away from country life, it has brought certain gains as well as losses in its train. Much of the valuable maternity and child welfare work now being carried on in India is centred in the factory areas. This is particularly true of Bombay, where maternity and child welfare work has so prospered, under the fostering care of Lady Lloyd, Lady Cowasjee Jehangir, and others, that now 70 per cent. of childbirths take place in the cleanly surroundings of hospitals, and the benefits are now being extended even into villages. Free medical treatment is a common feature of most large concerns, and dependents share the doctors' services. Private hospitals are found too in some mill areas, and girls' schools and crèches (especially the latter) are a common feature of many large industrial undertakings. Maternity benefit for women who have been more than a year in the mill or plantation is a common feature under the more up-to-date employers, and has become a statutory obligation in certain kinds of factories.

All these ideas have been imported from the West as a result of the humaner relationship between capital and labour which exists in many European countries. It is fair to argue that along with the many disabilities that attend labour in large centres there is a certain amount of gain to the women who come and go between town and country. Some of them carry back to their villages a higher expectation of what is due to labour, and they glimpse a need for more recreation and variety in life than their village surroundings afforded.

The International Labour Office at Geneva has always maintained particularly happy and cordial relations with the women's organizations working for social reform in India.

'The history of the decade that has followed India's entry into the I.L.O. shows that the hostility of the employing classes has been tempered down to a considerable extent, largely as a result of a new sense of human values which Part XIII of the Treaty has done so much to inculcate. Most remarkable of all, labour itself has been galvanized into life and awakened to a consciousness of its rightful place in the economic life of the country. It is not extravagant to claim that in the bringing about of these happy results Geneva has played a leading part.'

<sup>1</sup> *Memorandum of All-India Women's Conference, 1906.*

Indian women have particularly appreciated the fact that the International Labour Office has always taken special care to include women in its councils. It has listened with respect to the Indian women who have been accredited spokesmen at Geneva, and has frequently adopted their proposals. The mutual regard and loyal co-operation of the International Labour Office and women's organizations in India has been one of the happiest interchanges of East and West.

Since it is impossible to believe (in spite of Mr. Gandhi and other *laudatores temporis acti*) that the evolution of India into a great industrial State can be checked, it is fortunate that her industrial revolution did not gather much impetus till ideas about the human needs of labour had found expression in the West. No one could wish to minimize the cruel conditions under which women and children still labour in India, and the long distance which must still be travelled before they can voice their own needs; but at least they have their champions, and the self-righteous complacency of early capitalists in Great Britain, who saw in unprotected labour just so much factory fodder, is impossible in India to-day. Women's organizations are very much alive to the problems of female labour, and the considerable number of women in the legislatures is a guarantee that the needs of their inarticulate and unorganized sisters will not be neglected; while such of the employers as are not naturally disposed to humane treatment—are kept up to the mark by the International Labour Office and the terms of the Washington Agreement, which India was one of the earliest nations to endorse.

#### WOMEN AND POLITICS

There is a breath-taking abruptness about the entry of Indian women into political life. One moment they were not there, the next they had sprung, like Athene from the head of Zeus, fully armed into the forefront of the scene. A few women were with difficulty persuaded to go on deputation to ask to have their names included on the electoral roll, when the Hon. Edwin Montagu visited India as Secretary of State in 1917. Four years later, almost before they knew or cared what a vote meant, women found themselves registered as voters in Madras and Bombay.

Nor can it be argued that the change was merely a formal recognition of a desire which had been latent all the time. The truth is that women had not thought of themselves as a necessary or potentially powerful element in national life. In spite of the part played from time to time in Indian history by queens, as rulers or warriors, in spite of Sultan Raziyya's wisdom and courage in the thirteenth



century, Nurjahan's administrative ability in the seventeenth, or the valour of the Rani of Jhansi in the nineteenth, and the achievements of many other distinguished princesses, the women of India were not part of the warp and woof of civic life. They were prisoners of a social system which imposed purdah on its high caste and ignorance on its low caste women.

On the other hand, we see that, as soon as women's suffrage with its many implications was offered, they at once grasped its importance, and even eagerly demanded a vote for every adult woman. They never under-estimated the suffrage or looked on it as a mere bauble. The offer of the vote matched their hour. At the very moment when Congress and Mahatma Gandhi were calling on them for a national effort, they recognized that the prophet and the paramount power had each placed a valuable weapon within their reach. With one hand they grasped passive resistance and with the other the vote.

In twenty years<sup>1</sup> women in India passed from apathetic indifference to eager activity and an acute awareness of their responsibility as citizens. 'Phenomenal' is the adjective in commonest use to describe their progress. They became conscious of the claims of national life almost overnight. In Bombay, for instance, women who did not know their way along the main streets, and had never seen the sea surrounding their island, formed themselves into a band of *Desh-Sevikas*, who walked in processions, picketed liquor and European shops, lay on the tram-lines, and obstructed the traffic for thirty hours at a stretch. Arrests were numerous and imprisonment was not only accepted but courted, in the same spirit as suffragettes had gone to jail in England. It is said that throughout India two thousand women, from eighteen to seventy

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps a few bald dates will best illustrate the speed of their political progress.

1917. A few women went on a deputation to the Hon. Edwin Montagu to ask for votes.

1921-6. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms gave the provinces mandatory power to enfranchise women (1921). Women were placed on the electoral rolls in Madras and Bombay (1921), the United Provinces (1923), the Central Provinces, the Punjab, and Bengal (1926).

1923. Women voted for the Legislative Assembly and provincial Legislative Councils.

1926. Women were made eligible for seats in provincial legislatures.

1927. Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi was nominated the first woman member of a provincial Council.

1921-33. The number of women electors (restricted through their not holding sufficient property to qualify as voters) was 315,651 (6,792,821 men).

1935. The Government of India Act enfranchised 6,000,000 women (29,000,000 men), and reserved 42 seats for women in legislatures.

1937. Eight women were elected to legislatures in constituencies reserved for women; five were nominated to seats. Six took office as Minister, Deputy Speakers, and Under-Secretaries.

1938. The first woman was elected to the Council of State.

years of age, were imprisoned in the years 1929-32. This was self-sacrificing service on the grand scale, involving notoriety, hardship, the abandoning of home claims and young children, and all that the Indian woman holds most dear. Their deeds bore witness of their faith. But perhaps even more remarkable than the mass obedience to the nationalist call was the organizing ability shown by the leaders. Women came upon the scene not merely as privates in the Congress army, but as lieutenants and generals, and one, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, as commander-in-chief.

Patriotism tends perhaps to obscure how much they owe to the West and to hide their debt to the feminist movement in Europe. But the fact remains that, without this movement, the granting of full citizenship to women in India would hardly have arisen as a question of practical politics, and might never have occurred to the constitution-makers of Delhi and Whitehall.

Indian women point out that they met with hardly any opposition from men in their demand for the vote, and lose sight of the fact that India, on her trial before the world as a nation fit for self-government, could hardly admit any inferiority in her women to those of other democracies. She was on her mettle to prove how much more enlightened her attitude towards women had lately become. Other factors working for the extension of the franchise were that the granting of the vote did not run counter to religious taboos (such as made the opposition to the raising of the marriage age so formidable an obstacle to progress in health and education), and the not irrelevant fact that women in India are nine millions fewer than men, all marry, rarely hold enough property to qualify as voters under that heading, and do not enter into economic rivalry with men, either in the labour market or in professions.

All these circumstances combined to make the enfranchisement of women run on an even keel into the happy haven of equal citizenship without having to meet the squally weather of sex-antagonism or the rock of entrenched masculine prerogative. It was most fortunate for India that women's claim to full civic responsibility had been fought out elsewhere. It was also fortunate that the leaders possessed a common language, English, which enabled them to meet and confer in any part of India, so that they could organize their political societies on an all-India basis. Societies such as the National Council of Women (founded in 1925) and the All-India Women's Conference (founded in 1926) were formed, to train women in their new duties and give them experience in organizing and public speaking.

When the hectic excitement of the passive resistance movement had spent itself, and men and women had to bring their minds to bear on the conditions and detailed provisions of the new con-



stitution, women addressed themselves to this constructive task with enthusiasm and ability. Three women, Mrs. Subbarayan, Begum Shah Nawaz, and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, attended the Round Table Conference in London in 1929-32 and easily held their own in that weighty gathering. Women are to-day performing honourable and onerous duties as Ministers, Under-Secretaries, and Deputy Speakers of provincial Legislatures, not to speak of their work on municipalities, local boards, and the magistrate's bench.

They are to-day fully convinced that patriotism without a constructive contribution through the legislatures is not enough. With conspicuous ability and courageous repudiation of the doctrine that 'that woman is most honourable whose name is never bruited by the lips of men', they stand as candidates in open elections, canvass, and make speeches in the legislatures. In no country have women achieved the fullest measure of citizenship with more dramatic suddenness, or proved more completely what two diverse civilizations, each with a valuable contribution to make to the other, can jointly bring to birth.

The part women are playing in India to-day is the fine flower of a century of preparation, during which the stimulus came mainly from the West. The seed fell on good soil, if it took long to germinate. Indian women have blossomed so astonishingly that, like the marvels of a Chelsea flower show, they seem to have hardly any relation to the original humble plant known to earlier generations. But they show vigour and hardiness as well as tropical rapidity of growth. It is of happy augury for the future that the women of both civilizations so cordially admire each other's achievement. Englishwomen are impressed with the courage, acumen, and brilliance of many Indians, while Indian women admire the tenacity and unselfishness of English workers who seek no reward other than that of knowing that a service has been done.

Indian women are also beginning to make their influence felt in world affairs. Their appearance at international conferences is no longer greeted with surprised congratulations that they should be there at all and able to speak English so beautifully. Their presence and co-operation are counted on, and it is even beginning to be felt that these latest representatives of democracy and convinced advocates of peace may have a valuable contribution to make to the democracies of the West and to the solidarity of women everywhere.

#### CULTURE

A final word must be said about Indian women's reaction to the arts of the West, to literature, music, and painting. The word culture is used with reluctance, since it implies more than is here

intended. But it is difficult to find another word to describe that distillation of western ideas which reached even the women who had had no formal education and yet became aware of a new spirit coming over to India from Europe.

History bears ample testimony to Indian women's capacity for a cultured life, but that capacity was being little exercised at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Their arts were at a low ebb, and it was contact with Europeans which made them realize that their lives lacked wide interests, and that Indian men, like the Greeks of the fifth century, had to look outside their homes for intellectual intercourse or beautiful music and dancing. They began to feel the need of expressing themselves through creative work, or at least of being in a position to appreciate all that enriched the lives of women in other lands.

At first this awakening showed itself in a desire to imitate the West, and culture was for a time identified with a knowledge of the English language. As an Indian lady, Mrs. Hansa Mehta, wrote:

'For the time being English produced wonderful results. Like Open Sesame, knowledge of the English language opened the gates of the Occident. The Indian mind was tired wandering in the same old grooves. A new vista opened before it. This contact with the West proved highly fruitful and highly refreshing. With the zeal of a convert the Indian mind applied itself to the task of mastering a foreign tongue. We have Aru Dutt and Toru Dutt writing their poems in English. Later on Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, whose command over the language would cause envy in the mind of an Englishman himself a master of English literature, followed suit. To talk in English, to write in English was considered the acme of culture in those early days. . . . Up till now Indian literature with very few exceptions was poetic. Whether it was the influence of the West or the nature of the prosaic scientific age, the age of reason, writing in prose became the order of the day. Mrs. Satyanathan wrote in English her two novels "Kamala" and "Saguna". In this century too was also born another kind of literature, *viz.* journalism.'

To-day not only the great English classics, the Bible, Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth, are as familiar in many Indian homes as in England, but the yearly output of more ephemeral literature is scanned with discrimination. The writer knew a Parsi schoolgirl whose most valued possession was a complete edition of Oscar Wilde's works, and such writers as G. Bernard Shaw, T. S. Eliot, and Aldous Huxley are widely read. This interest in contemporary problems of men and morals, in history, drama, and fiction, is something quite new for Hindu women.

All through the centuries the women poets of India had been occupied with a single theme, man's exile from God. An intense

<sup>1</sup> E. C. Gedge and M. Choksi, *Women in Modern India* (Bombay, 1929).



and poignant longing for divine fellowship runs through their verses—of prose there was none. They desired above all to be released from the body and to attain the soul's freedom. Poetry was engaged more with eternity than time. There were few songs of human love, but many of the divine love.<sup>1</sup> The one period of exception from this 'God-intoxication' of Indian poetesses was the period of Muslim rule. A galaxy of gifted women flourished in the Court of Akbar and his descendants. His aunt Gulbadan Begum wrote valuable memoirs, and the Empresses Mumtaz Mahal and Nurjahan were poetesses of note, while Aurangzeb's daughter Zeb-un-nissa wrote about her own beauty with ecstatic delight in human loveliness, music, and flowers. But with few exceptions (among them Rupamati, whose love for her husband, Baj Bahadur, ended in her refusal to outlive his disgrace and defeat) nearly all the poetesses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were still occupied with God and with eternity, and rarely with the love and beauty of the world.

Only after becoming acquainted with English literature did the thought of Hindu poetesses, like Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu, begin to express delight in this world. They showed consummate art in adopting both the manner and the matter of the English poets whom they so deeply admired. Could anything be more English than Aru Dutt's lilting lines?

Still barred thy door! The far east glows,  
The morning wind blows fresh and free.  
Shall not the hour that wakes the rose  
Awaken also thee?

To-day to their new-found delight in natural beauty fresh sources of inspiration have been added. Several Bengali poets, and above all others Sarojini Naidu, have chosen themes that are entirely modern and new, such as the sisterhood of women in every country and the ardent longing of Indian women for national freedom. Their verses breathe a passionate fervour of loyalty to the motherland, of which it is impossible to quote here more than a single instance:

Are we not thine, O Beloved, to inherit  
The manifold pride and power of thy Spirit?  
Ne'er shall we fail thee, forsake thee or falter,  
Whose hearts are thy home, and thy shield and thy altar.

Sarojini Naidu is so wonderful a product of both East and West that it would be impossible to say to which civilization she owes most, or in which language her poetic gift finds the more perfect expression. Poetry is her chief medium, but as an orator she moves

<sup>1</sup> See N. Macnicol, *The Making of Modern India*, pp. 157, 160.

her audience with equal mastery in English and in her own tongue and completely confutes the saying that East and West can never meet. In her they do.

The nationalist spirit is running so strongly in India to-day that there is a movement away from English and a desire to return to the vernaculars in prose and poetry. To quote Mrs. Hansa Mehta again:

'Contact with the West went to her head and intoxicated India with everything western. To-day we are feeling the evil after-effects of her debauch. . . . The present system of education has proved to be highly disintegrating and denationalizing in its character. Our literary efforts, which had gained in freshness by its first contact with the West, have sunk into mere nothings, mere imitations. We waste our time and energy in trying to master a foreign tongue, while our own vernaculars with all their potential wealth remain neglected. If India wishes to assert herself as of old, she must rouse herself from this hypnotic trance. It is a matter of gratification that we have begun to realise our drawback. It is still more gratifying to see men and women striving to free themselves from this bondage of intellectual slavery. . . . Our literature has taken up the cry of the country in danger.'

In the arts of music and painting a similar urge to drink of native springs is turning women away from imported wines of the West. It was not till they had suffered cruelly at the piano and harmonium that Indian women discovered how much they hated percussion and bellows, and also how remote from their own approach to music are the written compositions of western musicians. Since Indian musicians do not write down their inspirations, but express their ideas and emotions through improvisation, Indian music is even more intimate and individual than that of other lands, and it was inevitable that western music, in spite of the attainments of a few exceptional Indian pianists and violinists, made little appeal to Indian women generally. The musical idiom of the two civilizations is poles apart, and Beethoven and Chopin convey as little to the musical Indian as improvisations on the *sitar* convey to her English counterpart. For Indian music is a spiritual exercise, 'a call from the Divine shackled to the Divine eternally free', 'a celestial stream between the Lover and the Beloved', which can only be obstructed by written music. For a time Indian girls in the expensively educated classes were dragged into acquaintance with European musical instruments, but western music less than any art of the West had made a home in India.

Now, however, there are signs of a return to Indian music as a religious exercise and an expression of the reborn culture of the nation. Schools of indigenous music, where girls master the *sitar*,

<sup>1</sup> Gedge and Choksi, loc. cit., p. 100.



*dilruba*, and *vina*, have sprung up in Bengal, Madras, Bombay, and Gujarat, so that music may become an integral part of women's education, 'a household goddess and familiar friend'. At Shantiniketan, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore's school, great stress is laid on music and also on dancing, which this famous school has lifted into a new and honoured place among the arts of India.

Painting has come more directly under western influence than music, because the educational system endeavoured to foster it through schools of art dependent on government grants. During the present century young women have studied in these schools, but it is now generally agreed that this attempt to introduce foreign standards and methods has merely produced copyists in whom imagination was starved and originality killed, since Indian artists desire to express symbolic, religious, and abstract truth rather than to represent the known world. Whatever the cause may be, painting and sculpture have not produced a Toru Dutt or a Sarojini Naidu, and Indian women have never seemed as much at home in these arts as in western literature. Shantiniketan and the influence of the Tagore family are doing much to foster the arts of painting, music, and dancing among Bengali women and to turn their thoughts towards a more indigenous expression of these activities, and they willingly admit how much they owe to the imagination and sympathy of E. B. Havell and other Englishmen. In fact, no fair-minded Indian would deny that Indian art, though it passed through a somewhat barren stage of blind imitation, has in fact been revived by the clash of opposing ideals to a more fruitful life.

#### SUMMARY

It is generally agreed that more revolutionary changes have taken place in the status and outlook of Indian women during the last hundred years than in any preceding century. Owing to the seclusion of women and the rigid structure of Hindu society women were slower than men to come under the influence of western civilization. But when their hour struck, they stepped with startling suddenness from the wings on to the centre of the stage. Very different reasons are put forward for the dramatic change in their position. Indians maintain that women's position had always been central. Europeans point out that, if it was central, it was also static. They may have been enthroned, but they were riveted to their thrones, and the crown they wore became, through early marriage, despised widowhood, and unchallenged ignorance, a crown of thorns. The foregoing pages have tried to describe the part which the West played in changing these thorns into the laurels which they now wear.

In a well-informed book recently published by an Indian lady, describing the awakening of Indian women in the social, political and cultural fields, there is not a single reference to Britain or to Europe. This lady describes the demand of Indian women for a freer life, for greater equality between the sexes, and for economic independence as directly due to India's glorious past in Vedic and epic days, to women's proved capacity as warriors and queens in mediæval times, and to the inherent dignity of her status in the home to-day. The intrusion of western ideas is not even condemned or derided. It is treated as non-existent. India is said to have turned in her long sleep. The moment of awakening has arrived of its own accord, and India has felt the urge to reinstate women in the glorious setting in which Sita, Draupadi, and Sakuntala moved.

On the other hand, western observers, cut off by language barriers, unversed in the traditions of India, unable to share the deeply religious atmosphere in which Indian women are steeped, tend to under-estimate the profound influence of the past on the women of to-day, and perhaps to lay too much stress on the share the West has had in producing the modern women's movement. The very language in which the enfranchised women express themselves deceives the foreigner. It is full of familiar phrases, such as 'cottage industries', 'economic emancipation', 'social opprobrium', 'the Industrial Revolution', 'childish repressions', which mean something very different in England and in India. Even when Indian women express their deeper thoughts, if writing in English they inevitably make use of terms, cadences, quotations, which suggest a closer identity of thought than is sometimes the case. 'The Good Shepherd', 'the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns' mean something quite different to followers of Christ and followers of Krishna, to believers in immortality and believers in *Karma*.

Yet when due allowance has been made for the immense inspiration of India's past, the question has still to be answered: Why did the awakening come in the nineteenth century, and not in the eighteenth or seventeenth, or at the time when Hinduism was challenged by Islam? The answer must be that it was the result of contact with the West. To quote the words of an Indian by no means uncritical of the West, Mr. K. Natarajan:

'British rule has transformed Indian life and thought more in one hundred years than Hindu and Moslem in several centuries. It has given a new direction to Indian history. It has filled our minds with hopes and aspirations undreamt of before. It has brought us in close relation with world movements. It has made us feel that we have a part in moulding the future of humanity.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Indian Social Reformer* (Bombay, Jan. 1938).



The position of Indian women had been static for centuries, till western rulers, missionaries, Orientalists began to trouble the waters. First a tiny ripple disturbed the dead level, then fresh currents began to flow into the river. Now the whole surface is moving, breaking down the sluices and overflowing the ancient banks.

Though Indian women freely criticize the idle and parasitic life of some western women, as they see them in India or London, they praise and envy the West's army of enfranchised and trained women who devote their lives to public service. India admires their thoroughness, their unrewarded devotion to those in need, their freedom of movement, their organizing ability and wide experience. For this reason, for instance, they emphasize the importance of sending social workers to train in England or America, though the funds spent on such training could be used to equip a larger number in their own surroundings. In the training for social service it is India that insists on the broadening effect of training in the West, while English social workers advocate training under Indian conditions.

In spite of the temptation of nationalist feeling to ascribe the renaissance of women to a renewed awareness of India's glorious past, few sincere Indian women to-day deny that their enfranchisement is mainly due to western influence. The treasure-house was stored with great riches. Indian women had high intelligence, administrative capacity, unselfish devotion to those dependent on them, and artistic gifts of no mean order. But someone from outside had to produce the key and unlock the door before these treasures could be used on a national scale. The West supplied the key, and in forcing the doubly and trebly locked door has accomplished a task of great magnitude.

Not for thousands of years, if ever, have Indian women enjoyed such freedom, dignity, and respect, or been in so strong a position to serve their day and generation as they are in to-day. It may even be said that not even the British moulding of the many castes, creeds, and races of a vast continent into a single nation is a greater achievement than the liberation and unity which the West has brought to Indian women.

## CHAPTER XIV LITERATURE AND DRAMA

### 1. BENGALI

THE beginning of Bengali literature may be conveniently dated about the eleventh century A.D., and its middle period about the fourteenth or fifteenth century. The modern period starts with the year 1800, when the Fort William College was established in Calcutta. The nineteenth century is also the period of western influence, which operated through several channels, but mainly through the introduction of English education, as the teaching of western arts and sciences through the medium of English came to be called in India. The effects of western influence will be assessed in detail later, but it may be noted here that the literature produced in the century and a quarter after 1800 is larger in bulk than the whole of the literature produced in the nine or ten centuries prior to that date.

The Fort William College was established with the object of training British civil servants in the languages, law, history, and customs of India. It gave a great impetus to the development of Bengali by bringing it within the pale of official recognition and by the linguistic and literary work done by members of its staff, notably by William Carey working in collaboration with Indian scholars. Impetus also came from the European Christian missionaries, who adopted the language of the people as the best vehicle of propaganda. Their greatest service to Bengali was the introduction of printing. The printing-press brought literature within the reach of a large public and enabled it to develop in many ways hitherto impossible. It finally destroyed the oral tradition which Bengali, in common with other Indian literatures, had retained from its origin, and facilitated, really necessitated, the growth of prose.

The introduction of printing inevitably led to the growth of Bengali journalism. Its founders were the Serampore missionaries, who in 1818 published the *Digdarshan* and the *Samachar Darpan*. The English newspapers of Calcutta created the taste and supplied the model, and other Bengali newspapers, the *Timiranasak*, the *Sambad Kaumudi*, and the *Samachar Chandrika*, came out in rapid succession and were followed in 1830 by the famous *Sambad Prabhakar* of Iswar Chandra Gupta. Later in the century came the philosophical and literary magazine, such as the *Tattwabodhini Patrika* of Akshay Kumar Dutt and the *Vangadarshan* of Bankim Chandra Chatterji. There is great journalistic



activity in Calcutta to-day, and almost every important provincial town of Bengal has its own vernacular newspaper.

English was adopted by government as the language of education in 1835 and made the passport to government service in 1844. The strongest demand for it came from among a number of progressive Hindus who saw in the modern scientific learning of Europe the secret of the superior power and efficiency of modern Europeans, and who were anxious to import that learning in order to combat the social and intellectual backwardness of their country. How anxious they were can be seen from the protest that Ram Mohan Ray, the social and religious reformer, sent in 1823 to the Governor-General against the establishment of a Sanskrit college in Calcutta.

'This seminary (similar in character to those which existed in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon) can only be expected to load the minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practical use to the possessor or to society. The pupils will there acquire what was known 2,000 years ago, with the addition of vain and empty subtleties since produced by speculative men. . . . I beg your Lordship will be pleased to compare the state of science and literature in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon with the progress of knowledge since he wrote. If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge, the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of the schoolmen. . . . In the same way the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature.'

The progressive Bengalis of the day were deeply conscious of the fact that the British conquest of India, besides bringing about a political and economic change, had brought about a greater revolution in matters of the intellect and spirit. It had removed India from the moral atmosphere of Asia to that of Europe. The advent of western learning was for them as great and happy a phenomenon as the advent of the Renaissance in fifteenth-century Europe. For this they had a sense of gratitude towards England, and they acknowledged it generously. As Keshab Chandra Sen, the social and religious leader, said in his *Lectures in India*: 'Politically and intellectually England is our master. We have been brought up in the school of English thought and have been inoculated with western ideas and sentiments.'

None of the promoters of English education—the progressive Hindus, the missionaries, or the government—had it as their object to discourage Bengali, far less to replace it by English. The Indian vernaculars not being sufficiently developed, the initial question was whether English or the classical languages,

Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian, should be the medium of western education; and the decision was made in favour of English. The vernaculars were never neglected; the system of education very soon became bilingual, and it was hoped that the contact with English would help them to develop. The hope has been amply justified in the case of Bengali, which is now rapidly replacing English as the medium of instruction in schools and colleges, and is one of the subjects for the highest examination of the Calcutta University.

Prior to the nineteenth century Bengali occupied the same subordinate position to Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian as the modern European languages did to Latin and Greek in medieval and renaissance times. The classical languages were the vehicles of culture and the repositories of ancient history and knowledge. They performed the high offices of the Church and the State, and were zealously cultivated and generously patronized. Bengali was the literature of the people, and led a second-hand existence on themes almost entirely derived from Sanskrit, from which it had also derived its vocabulary, grammar, system of rhetoric and prosody, and literary types and modes. It was primitive in character and outlook, and suffered from the limited range of ideas and experience of folk literature. It had evolved no prose literature, no critical, historical, or scientific writing, no literature of thought and knowledge. Its poetry was more musical than poetic, the poems being meant to be sung as hymns or devotional songs rather than to be recited and read. Even the long narrative was meant to be chanted. It had no secular literature, and was entirely harnessed to religious or semi-religious cults, such as Saivism, Vaishnavism, and Tantrism, and to the worship of classical and indigenous deities, such as Krishna, Rama, Siva, Sakti, Manasa, and Sitala. The writers were, as a rule, saints and devotees who wrote primarily from a religious, not literary or artistic, motive, and whose principal concern with life was how to be delivered from it. The sole notes of pre-nineteenth-century Bengali literature are those of *Bhakti* (devotion to some deity) and *Moksa* (release), and there is hardly a single work which is inspired by pure joy of living. So deep was the religious obsession that even when the theme was secular, as for instance the secret love of Vidya and Sundar in the poems written about them, a religious ending had to be foisted upon it. The human note is struck more clearly than anywhere else in the work of the Vaishnava poets Vidyapati, Chandidas, and Govinda Das, but even there human love is put into an allegorical religious setting and made the symbol of the human spirit craving for union with the divine.



Being essentially a literature of escape, Bengali had little interest in, or contact with, the actualities of life. As the result, the bulk of it was monotonous, platitudinous, convention-ridden, and devoid of substance and virility. A comparison with its present state will show how the contact with English has given it substance, variety, intellectuality, and modernity. It has developed a wide range of interests and has become a fit medium for adult and civilized consciousness. More important than anything else, it has become humanized. The old mystical-devotional obsession persists, but does not prevail, and there is increasing contact with life and worldly things. The English language has given the Indian vernaculars access not only to English literature but, through translations, to the literature of Europe. The Bengali writer of to-day need no longer live in the darkness and isolation of his native medievalism; he is the citizen of the entire modern world. The influence of Bengali spreads over the other vernacular literatures and is a modernizing and vitalizing force in present-day India.

The disappearance of the oral tradition as the result of the introduction of printing had the most salutary effect on the form of Bengali poetry, just as the contact with English enriched its subject-matter. Poems were no longer meant to be chanted or sung (except when specially composed as words for music), but to be read and recited. Poetry thus became free to live its own life, to develop in the light of its own laws of prosody, and to explore to the full its own resources of metrical and verbal beauty. In other words, poetry was reborn, both as regards form and matter. A great activity set in for inventing new verse forms and for introducing variations in the old verse-forms. For this the stimulus and the models were supplied by English poetry. The greatest formal innovations of the nineteenth century were the *Amitrahsar Chanda* (blank verse) and *Chaturdaspadi Kabita* (sonnet), which were introduced by Madhu Sudan Dutt after the Miltonic model. The important feature of Dutt's blank verse was not rhymelessness—for Sanskrit verse was unrhymed, though there was no unrhymed verse in Bengali—but the rhythm and the device of running on the sense from line to line; and for these Dutt was indebted to Milton. A modified form of Dutt's blank verse, brought nearer to spoken speech, was used by Girish Chandra Ghose for his historical and romantic plays, and obtained wide vogue on the Bengali stage. Dutt's innovation aroused a storm of protest from the traditionalists, but in this, as in other things, they fought for a lost cause. The age was one of innovation and experiment, of replacing the old by the new, of breaking away from native traditions and of adopting foreign standards. Another innovator was

Bihari Lal Chakravarti, whose exquisite lyric measures have earned him the name of the father of the modern Bengali lyric. Rabindranath Tagore was influenced by Chakravarti, and started his poetic career on the same path of experiment. His metrical innovations cover a wide field, and the wealth of formal beauty he has contributed to Bengali poetry will do credit to any major poet. The most important name among the junior contemporaries of Tagore is that of Satyendra Nath Dutt, who made many experiments in Bengali prosody, especially in his attempts to adapt foreign verse-forms.

Madhu Sudan Dutt was so highly westernized that he embraced Christianity, travelled to Europe, and started his literary career as a writer of English verse. He is one of the earliest of that class of Bengali writers who have attempted original work in English, and who represent a different aspect of western influence from that with which this essay is concerned. If Dutt had continued to write in English, he might have become a third- or second-rate Victorian, but he remains a first-rate Bengali poet. Besides creating the Bengali blank verse he wrote the first, and so far the greatest, Bengali epic. The theme of the *Meghnadbadh* is derived from the *Ramayana*, but Dutt treated it in an unorthodox and modern manner. He safeguarded the heroic character of his poem by keeping it completely clear of religion—a great achievement when one remembers that all the vernacular adaptations of Sanskrit epics and semi-epics before him were religious in character. Religious elements had even crept into the original *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and destroyed their heroic character. Dutt's western education showed itself in an episode, derived from the *Odyssey*, which he boldly introduced into his epic. He was followed by several writers of epic and long narrative poems on classical and historical subjects. The best of these were Rangadal Banerji, Hem Chandra Banerji, and Nabin Chandra Sen. The influence of Byron and Scott is noticeable in their narrative poetry. Rabindranath Tagore's debt to the West has been more in respect of style and technique and general inspiration than of subject-matter. His early lyrics show him to have been a student of Shelley. In the work of his middle and later periods can be seen the influence of the English aesthetic movement of the end of the nineteenth century, of Maurice Maeterlinck, and of the poets of the Celtic Twilight. Tagore's is the principal influence on contemporary Bengali poetry, but some of the younger poets of to-day are breaking away from the Tagorean manner and sentiment and seeking inspiration from modern English poets, notably T. S. Eliot and D. H. Lawrence.

In its early days of development, Bengali prose was heavy,



rigid, and over-Sanskritized. The growth of journalism and the novel helped to relieve it of the classical coat of armour, to make it modern, and to impart to it the naturalness and flexibility of the spoken language. The history of Bengali prose style in the nineteenth century is that of the rapid replacement of *Sadhu Bhasa* (literary language) by *Chalit Bhasa* (colloquial language). The influence of English has been uppermost in bringing about this transformation. All the writers had received English education and were bilingual, with the result that, consciously or unconsciously, they introduced characteristics of English prose while writing Bengali. The extent to which Bengali prose has become anglicized in texture and rhythm will be seen from the simple fact that all the English punctuation points are now as thoroughly at home in Bengali as they are in English, though prior to the nineteenth century Bengali had no other point than the full stop. Ram Mohan Ray was the pioneer of Bengali prose and of the literature of thought. The other best prose writers of the nineteenth century were Tek Chand Thakur, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Bhudeb Chandra Mukharji, Debendranath Tagore, and Romesh Chandra Dutt. There is a large and flourishing prose literature in Bengal to-day. As of contemporary Bengali poetry, more than half the beauty and power of contemporary Bengali prose is the creation of Rabindranath Tagore.

Two of the greatest gifts of the West to Bengali literature were the novel and the modern drama. Before the nineteenth century the Indian classical and vernacular literatures had the fable and the romance, but the modern social and historical novel is the direct outcome of western influence. The same is true of the modern Bengali and Indian drama and theatre. They are entirely based on modern western models and have nothing in common with the classical Sanskrit drama and theatre and with such semi-dramatic forms of local rustic growth as the *yatra*. The novel struck roots with surprising ease and rapidity, and there was a large output of all varieties of it, such as social, historical, and mystery, in the nineteenth century. It is now the most popular and flourishing art, and is mainly occupied, as in Europe, with social themes. Scott, Lytton, and Wilkie Collins seem to have had the most influence on the early Bengali novelists. Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the greatest of them, and the founder of the Indian school of fiction, paid a direct tribute to Lytton by modelling the heroine of his *Rajani* on the blind girl of *The Last Days of Pompeii*. Chatterji's historical novels are rhetorical in style and romantic in their approach to history, as are the historical novels of Scott. The western influence persists in the novels of Romesh Chandra Dutt and Rabindranath Tagore, both of whom were educated in

England and have earned distinction as writers in English. In his autobiography Tagore has related how, as a boy, he used to shed tears on reading a translation of *Paul et Virginie*. The eternal triangles and sex problems of Sarat Chandra Chatterji and the younger novelists of to-day are clearly imported from Europe.

There were English theatres in Calcutta as early as 1756, and it was on their model that the first Bengali theatre was built in 1832. It was a private theatre, and the first original Bengali play, the *Kulina-kula-sarvasva*, was acted there in 1857. This play followed the canons of classical Sanskrit drama, but the *Sarmistha*, acted in another private theatre at Calcutta in 1859, was constructed in the modern western style and established that style permanently on the Bengali stage. The author of *Sarmistha* was no other than Madhu Sudan Dutt, the pioneer of the new Bengali drama as of the new Bengali poetry. The following passage from one of his letters shows the new spirit of the age:

'What care you if there be a foreign air about the thing [*Sarmistha*]? Do you dislike Moore's poetry because it is full of orientalism? Byron's poetry for its Asiatic air, Carlyle's prose for its Germanism? Besides, remember that I am writing for that portion of my countrymen who think as I think, whose minds have been more or less imbued with western ideas and modes of thinking; and that it is my intention to throw off the fetters forged for us by a servile admiration of everything Sanskrit.'

The new drama found able practitioners in Manomohan Bose and Dinabandhu Mitra and had its future life assured in 1873 when Girish Chandra Ghose, actor, manager, and playwright, founded the first public theatre in Calcutta. Since then the drama has rapidly grown, and Calcutta now possesses several public theatres. The best-known of Ghose's younger contemporaries were Amrita Lal Bose and Dwijendra Lal Ray. Rabindranath Tagore has written several plays, some of which are in the Maeterlinckian manner.

The main bulk of Bengali literature since the nineteenth century bears the mark of western influence in some form or other. The influence is seen quantitatively in the mass of fiction, poetry, drama, literature of thought and knowledge, and, above all, in an immense journalistic literature, all either translated from English or almost entirely based upon English or European models. The influence is seen qualitatively in such works as the novels of Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the epic of Madhu Sudan Dutt, and the devotional songs and many lyric poems of Rabin-

\* Yogindra Nath Basu, *Jiban Charit or Life of Madhusudan Dutt* (Calcutta, 1905), p. 231.



dranath Tagore, which are Indian in character and outlook but European in form and technique. The best writers of the nineteenth century and of the present day belong to the second class, and the best writers of the future will for a long time belong to it. This does not mean that there has not been any conservative reaction against the western influence, but that the reaction has been sectional and uninfluential. Since the nineteenth century the cultural development of Bengal has mainly been in the direction of a synthesis between the West and the East, of a fusion of the best that is in modern Europe with the best that was in ancient India. Ram Mohan Ray, for instance, not only agitated for the introduction of English education, but inaugurated a 'back to the *Upanishads*' movement in religion.

The first effect of English education was that young Bengal of the day became denationalized and hyper-westernized. The tide turned in the 'eighties when the movement began for the creation of a national Indian culture with roots in the country's past civilization, but purged of the corruptions of medieval and post-medieval times. But the movement was not directed against westernism as such, but against the ill-assimilated and exaggerated westernism that had prevailed so far. What is more, it was equally strongly directed against the conservatism that stood for the perpetuation of medieval and post-medieval conditions. This is seen in all the important social dramatists and novelists since the 'sixties. They show up the evils of both hyper-westernism and hyper-indianism in Bengali life. The movement for a national culture was the offshoot of the spirit of political nationalism that was aroused by the impact of Europe and was far from being independent of western influence. Its knowledge of ancient Indian civilization was derived from the researches of European indologists and of Indian scholars trained by them. Even the nationalist spirit was indebted to such works by Englishmen as Tod's *Annals of Rajasthan* for many of the themes through which it found expression in Bengali literature.

It should be said, however, that except among a small number of intellectuals, the best elements of European literature cannot be said to have arrived in Bengal yet, or, having arrived, to have struck roots. The Bengali writers have none of them sought from the West the intellectuality and scientific realism which their literature needed most and which are the best things modern Europe can give. What is worse, they have sought in the West new refuges for the sentimentalism, escapism, and mysticism that were the bane of Bengali literature in the past. At a lower level, westernized Bengali literature has suffered from the fact that the class of European literature that has exerted the most vital and

widespread influence in India is the journalistic and pseudo-literary class to be found in the railway book-stalls and suburban libraries of Europe. This is as much due to the inability of the majority of Indians to comprehend the best elements of western literature as to the same inability of the majority of Europeans, belonging chiefly to the military and commercial classes, who go to India. The inferior culture thus diffused is freely acquired by the majority of educated Indians and passes for the best that Europe could give to India. The Indian universities try to improve taste, but their influence hardly touches the fringe of the living, creative literature. All this is not meant to suggest that the increasing fertilization of Bengali literature by the West is neither desirable nor practicable, but to show the difficulties that have lain in the way.

The difference in the literary ideals and models of modern Europe and pre-British Bengal and, more than anything else, the difference in the conditions of life of the two countries have impeded the diffusion of western influence and have produced many incongruities. Thus the modern Bengali drama, though western in form, is rhetorical and lyrical in spirit, rather than dramatic in the modern western sense. Many of the so-called problems and much of the so-called psychology of modern Bengali sex novels, besides being derived from the inferior class of European fiction mentioned above, are completely divorced from Bengali life. But such incongruities are only to be expected, for the first impact of one culture on another always takes place through the weakest aspects of both and produces a state of temporary rootlessness. What is desired is that the western influence should continue and be more intensive. Bengali will then be able to assimilate the best aspects of western literature and so realize to the full the new life on which it has started so well.

## II. HINDI

Hindi has a long history. The language, originating in the Apabhramsa, which began to constitute the common speech of the people about the second century B.C., may be said to have assumed literary form in the eighth century A.D., when the poet Sarabpa, who wrote mostly in the Apabhramsa, used Hindi phrases and sentences, perhaps unconsciously, to such an extent that he must be regarded as the first Hindi poet. He was followed by some three dozen writers, who flourished from the eighth to the twelfth century, of whom the last and greatest, Chand Bardai, wrote the famous poem *Prithiraj Rasau*. With this notable exception, their works were mostly religious and were based on the Sanskrit writings of Hindu and Jain poets.



The productions of subsequent poets and writers during the five or six centuries of Muslim rule in India unmistakably establish the fact that the literature of that period was to a considerable extent influenced by Islamic thought and culture, though the ground-work and whole structure of the vast majority of literary works continued to be essentially Hindu, in design as well as execution. The religious renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries also had a great influence on literature which lasted for 200 years and more. We need not therefore feel at all surprised, and should not have the slightest hesitation in admitting, that the life and thought of modern western civilization has had a similarly marked, and indeed much greater, influence on Hindi. Before the establishment of British rule, Hindi literature was mostly concerned with religious, philosophical, descriptive, martial, sensuous, emotional, and other such subjects. Poetry naturally preponderated over prose and drama; the proportion of the latter to poetry was indeed more or less infinitesimal. The impact of the West was, as it were, instrumental in shaking us from the slumber of centuries and forcing us to visualize the realities of life, and this awakening has changed the content and character of our literature.

The use of Hindi extends over several provinces of India, where it comes into contact with many other languages, with the result that it assumes various forms in various parts. It has also been affected by the influence of Muslim culture, which produced different linguistic forms even in the same areas. It will be helpful to our purpose briefly to explain the results before proceeding farther. The words used in Hindi have been styled *tatsam* (pure Sanskrit words), *tadbhava* (Hindi-ized forms of Sanskrit words), and *deshaj* (local words derived from popular parlance). These divisions strictly relate to Sanskrit only, but they can be extended to Persian, to Arabic, and also to English words; e.g. 'lantern' is a *tatsam* word while 'lalten' is *tadbhava*. As regards the etymology and construction of sentences, there are two main forms called Brajbhasha, which is the language of the district and vicinity of Mathura, and Khari-boli, which is that of the district and neighbourhood of Meerut. These two have been used both in poetry and in prose since the thirteenth century, besides Avadhi, Bundelkhandi, Marwari, and other forms, but Brajbhasha was the dominant form before the beginning of the nineteenth century. Urdu adopted Khari-boli as its basis, as Muslims made their capital at Delhi which is near Meerut, and used in it both Indian and their own Persian and Arabic words. As Urdu went on improving and assuming literary forms, it gradually eschewed Hindi words, inclining more and more towards a difficult Persian and Arabic vocabulary. Though the grammar and construction of Hindi and

Urdu are identical, yet scholarly Hindi inclines towards Sanskrit, and similarly Urdu towards Arabic and Persian, with the result that in their advanced stages they appear to be two different languages in spite of their common origin, verbs, and construction of sentences.

The British began to extend their political influence from the middle of the eighteenth century, but western culture naturally took some time to take root. One of its first fruits was the rapid development of prose literature. This was not a new product. There are known to have been prose writers in the fourteenth century, when Gorakh Nath and Jyotirishwar flourished (about 1350); and stray specimens of a much earlier period have been unearthed in the course of a search for Hindi manuscripts which was started by the Nagri Pracharni Sabha of Benares in the last decade of the nineteenth century. In the second half of the eighteenth century again several prose writers came into prominence, of whom two, Sadasukhlal (1780) and Insha Allah Khan (1798), may be mentioned, as they illustrate the tendency of the language to take varying forms. Sadasukhlal, though he knew Persian and Arabic quite well, excluded them from his vocabulary, which was pure Hindi, i.e. correct Khari-boli with some admixture of Sanskrit words. Insha Allah Khan's language was such that it may be called Hindi or Urdu at one's pleasure, and he was one of the earliest writers, after Jyotirishwar, to turn Hindi prose from religious to secular subjects.

The real prose age, however, began in the last quarter of the eighteenth or the early years of the nineteenth century; it certainly began to make rapid strides after 1800, and to improve in quality, though it was still neither polished nor free from localisms. The chief prose writers in the first quarter of the century were Lalluji Lal and Sadal Misra (1803), Janki Prasad (1812), and the Baptist missionary William Carey, whose works were products of the conditions created by the new régime. Lalluji Lal and Sadal Misra wrote books for use in schools; the former had a strong admixture of Brajhasha in his style, the latter used Khari-boli with some admixture of eastern forms. William Carey published translations of Christian religious writings entirely in Khari-boli, with a purity of style which is remarkable considering the period at which he wrote and that which preceded it. Christian writers also produced educational books on history, geography, chemistry, and other sciences. They generally eschewed Persian and Arabic words, even though they were obliged to take words from village dialects in their place, probably because their proselytizing was not popular among Muslims but found most favour with Harijans (untouchables) and low-caste Hindus.



As regards Hindi poetry, its greatest masters flourished long before western culture was even known in India. Chand Bardai, Kabir, Tulsi Das, Rahim, Keshava, Behari, Bhushan, Mati Ram, Dev, and other great poets shed lustre on Hindi literature from the twelfth to the seventeenth century, but after this there was an age of decadence. The eighteenth century produced no poet of the first rank, and the decline continued up to the first or even the second quarter of the nineteenth century, though we cannot ignore poets like Padmakar, Pratap Sahi, Chandra Shekhar, Gwal, and Din Dayal Gir, of whom some attained to great eminence, but none showed any western influence in their writings.

No new prose-writers of note were produced before the transition period of our literature (1833 to 1868). Before this there was a preponderance of religious and esoteric poetry, almost to the exclusion of other subjects of a realistic nature. In the transition period intellectuality and scientific realism found their way into literature, to the slow but steady replacement of the hide-bound and blind beliefs of the past; poetry acquired greater variety and a wider scope; prose developed to an extent unheard of in the past; and Brajbhasha gradually gave place to Khari-boli.

The brightest luminary of this period, a writer who is assured of a permanent place in our literature, was Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, who initiated a movement of religious reform, a religious renaissance which entitles him to be ranked with Raja Ram Mohan Ray and Keshab Chandra Sen. Seeking to purify and revivify Hinduism, he wrote in pure and forceful Hindi, protesting against the ritual and dogmas of Puranic teaching, in fulfilment of a vow that he would wage unceasing warfare against its dogmas and idolatry and establish education in accordance with ancient Brahmanic tradition. Hinduism was to be saved from the corruptions which had crept into it and at the same time prevented from falling a prey to unalloyed western influences. Opposed as he was to those influences, he was one of the first great nationalist writers in Hindi. Another prose writer of this period was Raja Shiva Prasad, whose literary work was largely devoted to popularizing a form of Hindi called Khichri Hindi, which had a strong admixture of Arabic *tatsam* and *tadbhava* words and resembled the modern Hindustani dialect which, in the interests of linguistic unity between Hindus and Muslims, many eminent persons are anxious to have adopted as a compromise between Hindi and Urdu.

The modern period begins about the year 1869, by which time railways, the post, and the telegraph had been established, and printing-presses, newspapers, and magazines were springing up in quick succession. The first Hindi newspaper, the *Benares Akhbar*,

had been helped into existence by Raja Siva Prasad in 1845; the magazine *Hindi Pradipa* was edited by Balkrishna Bhatta, a dramatist and humorist; the *Kavi Vaehani Sudha* was brought out by Bhartendu Haris Chandra of Benares in 1868. The last was a voluminous and extraordinarily versatile writer—a poet, prose-writer, dramatist, humorist, historian, novelist, and, above all, a profound patriot, his writings being infused by an ardent feeling of patriotism. He produced no less than 175 works during his short span of life extending to only thirty-five years, and he takes his place among the nine or ten foremost writers of Hindi since its inception as a literature some 1,200 years ago. The title of Bhartendu, i.e. the Moon of India (in contrast to the companionship of the Order of the Star of India conferred on Raja Siva Prasad), was given to him by the public as a tribute of admiration. His work as a dramatist calls for special notice. Dramas are known to have been produced as long ago as the fourteenth century, but there was nothing resembling modern dramas. Of the latter, one of the earliest was Raja Lakshman Singh's *Sakuntala Natak*, which was a translation from Kali Das. In the hands of Haris Chandra, dramatic art reached a high level, and he has been called the father of the modern drama in India. Some of his works were translations, others original compositions; all were distinguished for their freshness of style and treatment. He wrote pure Hindi with a certain number of Arabic and Persian words taken from current speech, his style being a compromise between that of Raja Siva Prasad and that of Raja Lakshman Singh. He had a number of followers, the ablest of whom, Pratap Narayan, was the originator of the cry 'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan', which has become a nationalist slogan.

Literary activity has taken many different forms and embraces subjects which were unknown in pre-British days. Religious and esoteric themes have given place to secular and popular subjects—political, social, and literary—and there is far greater objectivity. Novels and short stories of a modern type are a new branch of literature, as also is the essay, chiefly of a biographical and critical character, which, however, has by no means the same popularity. Good work has been done in archaeology, history, philosophy, and biography. There has been a new interest in the ancient literature of the land, largely owing to the pride in it inspired by the spirit of nationalism, and its history has been the subject of scholarly study and research. In this connexion we may perhaps be permitted to mention our joint work, the *Misrabandhu Vinod* (1911), the first systematic history of Hindi literature, which was preceded and largely inspired by an earlier study, *Shiva Singh Saroj* by Thakur Sheo Singh Sengar, and Sir George Grierson's *Modern Vernacular*



*Literature of Hindustan.* Criticism is not a new feature, for it was introduced in the first half of the eighteenth century by the poet Bhikharidas, but it has been developed on new lines in accordance with modern standards. Literature has become polemical and is the instrument of religious, social, and political propaganda. Political issues have had marked reactions on contemporary thought, and there is a mass of political literature with a strong tinge of nationalism. This again is not a new feature, for old poets like Bhushan and Lal in the time of Aurangzeb displayed a sturdy nationalism; but the modern output is of a different character and has different aims. In this, as in other directions, in the form and substance of literary work, the influence of the West is unmistakable.

With the extraordinary development of prose which has been going on since the beginning of the nineteenth century, it appeared at one time as if the day of poetry was almost over; indeed, the writers of this chapter expressed that opinion in 1911 in *Misra-bandhu Vinod*. Prose had assumed a modern garb, but poetry continued on traditional lines and was little affected by modern influences. Its subject-matter continued to be based mostly on ancient epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*; even really great men of the post-Buddhistic and Muslim periods seldom received any attention. Since then, however, with the rise of nationalism, the frequency of *kavi-sammelans* (poets' conferences) and the like, it has acquired vitality. It has been rejuvenated, and it gives us the greatest pleasure to acknowledge that a different and a fresher poetic atmosphere has been created. New varieties, particularly mysticism (*chhayavad*), have now assumed importance, and though our poets have not yet been fully able to shake off the domination of Tulsi's dictum that the muses get angry if one employs them in singing the exploits of worldly men, there is fortunately a tendency to break away from such an unwholesome restriction, and they are no longer obsessed by esoteric subjects. On the whole, however, Hindi poetry owes little to western inspiration, except in its modernity, as shown in its realistic and rationalistic tendencies. On the other hand, our prose literature, and also our dramatic works, meagre though the latter are even now, are for all practical purposes the product of western influence and culture alone. There was, as already stated, some prose literature in existence in earlier times, but it was small in quantity and limited in range, concentrating on religious themes and ignoring the actualities of life and its practical issues. Poetical and critical literature, history, archaeology, and the like were conspicuous by their almost entire absence. Our literature has now a far fuller content and is in closer contact with the realities of life owing to

the revolution, material, social, and intellectual, which has been effected by contacts with the West, such as the spread of English education, the intercommunication due to the post and railways, the growth of the Press, the development of political consciousness, and the influence of world-thought.

It remains for us to add that considerations of space have necessarily limited this survey to a general sketch of salient features and that we have consequently been obliged to exclude many particulars, including even the names of the best modern Hindi writers.

### III. MARATHI

Modern Marathi literature may be said to have begun with the advent of British rule in Maharashtra. Although Marathi literature dates as far back as the twelfth century, it was deficient in variety of form and subject, consisting mainly of poetry, ballads, and chronicles. It either dealt with mythological, legendary, and historical heroes and heroines or entered into philosophical and metaphysical labyrinths. Its tone was usually religious and didactic, and at times heroic. It took delight in narrating mystical experiences, and exhorted people not to be too worldly-minded but to remember God constantly and so 'cross the insurmountable ocean of life'. Poet-saints from Mukundraja to Moropant, excluding Ramdas, sung the glories of God and taught that the ideal of life was to renounce the world and strive to attain salvation.

With the spread of British rule, the old order changed, yielding place to new. People came more and more in contact with the rulers as well as with their literature. The new system of government, new educational methods, new customs and manners, new modes of thinking and behaviour which came with the new régime, had a great effect upon contemporary life and literature. At the same time the proselytizing attempts of Christian missionaries in India had an indirect influence on literature. They established vernacular schools, wrote vernacular text-books with the help of Indian pandits, and translated the Bible into several Indian languages. The Baptist Mission at Serampore published a number of books in Marathi, of which Dr. Carey's *Grammar of the Marhatta Language* (1805), the Gospel of Saint Matthew (1805), the *Panchatantra* (1815), and the *Hitopadesa* (1815) are worth mentioning. The Scottish Missionary Society at Bombay, by publishing Marathi translations of the Bible, also helped the growth of Marathi prose. The work of the missionaries inspired government to take steps in the direction of education, and, under the guidance of the then Governor, Mountstuart Elphinstone, a Native Schoolbook and School Society was established in Bombay in 1820. As a result of this, many schools were established and attempts were made to



educate the masses by publishing translations as well as original compositions in their mother tongue.

During the period 1810-74 a number of books were either translated or adapted from English into Marathi. Amongst these were translations of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Dr. Johnson's *Rasselas* (1873) by K. Chiplunkar, Chambers's *Moral Class Book* (1846) by Harikeshavji Pathare, *Robinson Crusoe* (1871), the *Arabian Nights*, *Aesop's Fables* (1806), and Berquin's *Children's Friend* (1828) by Sadashiv Kashninath Chhatre. Works such as these, however good in their own way, could not satisfy the creative genius of Marathi writers and their desire for self-expression, and they began to write original books meant to be read not by school-children but by the literary public. Of these early writers Rao Bahadur Deshmukh ('Lokhitwadi') deserves special mention on account of the appeal he made to his countrymen to give up their self-complacency and be prepared to accept the best that the West had to offer.

With the publication in 1875 of the series of essays entitled *Nibandh Mala* by Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar, a new era was ushered in—that of reaction from western influences. Earlier writers had been dazzled by western civilization and exhorted others to follow it blindly. Chiplunkar called on his compatriots to love, and be proud of, four things—their own country, their own religion, their own history, and their own language. He attacked his literary opponents with the weapons of invective and satire and gathered round him a band of workers and writers inspired by the same ideals. He himself imitated the style of Johnson, Macaulay, and Gibbon, and in the *Nibandh Mala* developed the essay form, which in pre-British days was not known to Marathi writers. They familiarized themselves with it only when they read Mill, Bentham, Macaulay, and Herbert Spencer, all of whom exercised a great influence over contemporary authors in Maharashtra. Chiplunkar brought it to perfection, and since his day it has become a favourite vehicle of thought, used by a number of writers, of whom distinguished examples are B. G. Tilak, G. G. Agarkar, S. M. Paranjape, N. C. Kelkar, A. B. Kolhatkar, and G. T. Madkholkar, all of them essayists who either were or are also journalists, and who, though influenced by English models, display distinctive individuality.

The modern personal essay is an offspring of English literature. Writers like Charles Lamb, 'Alpha of the Plough', and Robert Lynd, with their fascinating style and lovable personalities, have influenced Marathi writers, such as Professor Phadke, Mr. Khandekar, and Mr. Kanekar, who are making this a popular form of literary activity. To these authors nothing is trashy or unimportant;

from the broken umbrella to the rotten envelope things have a meaning for them; when we read their essays, we feel as if our friends were talking with us.

If there can be said to be any varieties of Marathi literature which have received their entire inspiration from English literature, they are the short story and the novel. No doubt there were short stories in earlier Marathi literature, but they were crude and inartistic. They were mostly stories from the *Panchatantra* and *Hitopadesa* and were essentially didactic. They bear no comparison with the modern short stories. Marathi writers were encouraged to handle this form of composition after reading the short stories of Hawthorne, Poe, Bret Harte, Stevenson, and O. Henry, and there are now a number of successful short-story writers including three ladies, Mrs. K. Rao, Mrs. Tilak, and Mrs. Lele. The novel was first introduced in the form of translations and adaptations of western fiction, and may be said to have been naturalized by Hari Narayan Apte. A writer of original genius and no mere copyist, he is popularly known as the Marathi Scott from his historical novels and also as the Marathi Dickens from the social novels which he wrote in a homely and interesting manner. He has had many successors—N. H. Apte, Professor V. M. Joshi, Professor Phadke, Dr. Ketkar, Mr. Khandekar, and Mr. Madkholkar, to mention a few outstanding writers, whose productions treat of every phase of life. The popularity of fiction is now firmly established, and though the work of many modern novelists reflects the influence of contemporary western writers, notably Tolstoi, Dostoevsky, Maxim Gorky, Galsworthy, Vicki Baum, and D. H. Lawrence; and though, as mentioned later, there is much that is not true to Indian life and thought, the novel is now not a mere exotic but has roots in the soil.

Modern Marathi drama dates more or less from the year 1840, when Vishnudas Bhawe produced dramas based on mythological themes. Since then it has been a favourite form of literature, as may be seen from the number of plays—some 1,200 to 1,300—written during the last hundred years. From the year 1840 to 1860 the dramas which were composed were mostly mythological and were of a peculiar and somewhat stereotyped pattern with gods and goddesses appearing on the stage together with demons. The year 1861 saw a change, for it was in that year that V. J. Kirtane wrote his original historical play called *Thorle Madhavrao Peshwe*. As a drama this has many faults, but as it was the first of its kind it came with a shock of pleasant surprise and created a great sensation. The Sanskrit pandits, by translating Sanskrit dramas, also helped in the development of Marathi drama, while performances by students of the Deccan College of a few dramas of Shakespeare



and Kalidasa attracted further attention to the dramatic art. Then came Anna Kirloskar, who revolutionized the stage with his musical play *Shakuntala* produced in the year 1881. This was a great and immediate success, people flocking in thousands to witness its performance. Encouraged by this experience, he wrote two other musical plays. The form of dramatic entertainment introduced by him had an immense vogue, and he may be said to have founded a school of playwrights who wrote on the same lines. The musical plays written by Kirloskar and his followers were based on the idea of English opera, but differ from it in making use of prose dialogues, together with a profusion of songs.

Translations and adaptations from Shakespeare followed. Almost half the total number of Shakespearian plays were translated into Marathi; *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *Cymbeline* were often performed. The second favourite English dramatist was Sheridan, whose *School for Scandal* and *The Rivals* were repeatedly translated. These translations made a permanent impression on the technique of the Marathi drama. Hitherto tragedy in the Shakespearian sense of the term had not existed in Marathi literature, as it was not to be found in the original model of Sanskrit literature. This does not mean that there was no tragic element in either. Bhavabhuti's famous Sanskrit drama *Uttarramcharita* is full of tragic atmosphere, which is also found in Marathi dramas, though they do not end with the death of the hero or heroine. With the study of Shakespeare's plays writers began to compose tragedies in Marathi. Prominent among these are Kirtane, Khadilkar, Gadkari, and Aundhkar. Khadilkar, a dramatist of great repute, has modelled his plays both on Shakespeare and on Kalidasa. They are mainly mythological, but he has also written some excellent historical plays.

The dramatists of the early twentieth century took other models, writing plays after the manner of Bernard Shaw, Galsworthy, Barrie, and Ibsen. In manner as well as in matter they completely transformed the Marathi stage. They wrote realistic drama dealing with social and political problems and did away with asides, soliloquies, rolling up of the curtain, frequent scenes, and frequent songs. Like the English stage, the Marathi stage is becoming more and more realistic. It owes much to the work of two popular dramatists, Mr. Varerkar and Mr. Atre. Mr. Varerkar has written a number of problem plays touching on various current social questions from untouchability to prohibition. Mr. Atre started on different lines. On account of the increasing popularity of the 'talkies' the stage was not able to hold its own against the cinema. Realizing that special means were necessary to attract audiences, he wrote comedies packed with humour and wit which

appealed to the lighter emotions. But this was not, and is not, his only or main business, for he has also written problem plays holding, as it were, a mirror up to society.

Modern Marathi poetry is very different from the old Marathi poetry. If the latter was religious and didactic, the former is essentially secular and romantic. The old poet narrated the heroic deeds and amours of gods and goddesses; the poet of the present day delights in narrating ordinary household affairs and the lives and loves of ordinary men and women. The old poetry ignored nature, but modern Marathi poetry deals with nature in all its aspects. As regards variety of form, the old poetry was hopelessly lacking in it. It consisted either of epic stories written mainly in *Ovi* or *Arya Vrutta* or of didactic and reflective verses written in *Abhang Vrutta*.<sup>1</sup> Modern Marathi poetry is far more flexible and varied, expressing itself through odes and elegies, sonnets and lyrics. New conceptions have been introduced as well as new metres, and, as Professor W. B. Patwardhan has remarked, it has learnt to live and move and have its being in this world, in the realities of material life.

For all this, it is greatly indebted to English poets like Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Byron, Tennyson, and Browning, and to twentieth-century poets like Hardy, Yeats, De la Mare, Masfield, and Bridges. The element of romance that we find in the poetry of Govindagraj, Tambe, Madhav-Julian, and Chandrashekhar is chiefly due to the study of Byron, Shelley, Keats, and Browning. Poets of nature like Balkavi Thomre, Keshavasuta, and N. V. Tilak owed their inspiration mainly to Wordsworth, whose influence is also apparent in Mr. Kunte's *Raja Shivaji*, a work written in the colloquial language of rustics. Chandrashekhar composed his *Rangrao Harshe* and *Chintopant Udas* after the manner of Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*.

It must here be pointed out that however great the influence of English poets may be on the poets mentioned above, some very good poetry was, and is being, written on the traditional lines of the old Marathi poets like Mukteshwar, Tukaram, and Moropant. Writers of this school are usually masters of prosody and rhetoric, and instead of looking to English poets for their inspiration have old Marathi and Sanskrit poets as their masters. Two distinguished examples are Chandrashekhar and Sadhudas, of whom the

<sup>1</sup> These short-stanza poems are native to Maharashtra. They are easy to recite and their structure is simple. *Ovi* means something which is woven. It is usually a stanza of four or three and a half octosyllabic lines. *Arya* means dignified or respectable. *Abhang* means unbroken or infallible and designates a measure in which there are run-on lines supposed to contain infallible truths. Most of the poet-saints of Maharashtra composed their poems in these slightly irregular yet highly popular measures.



former was the poet laureate of the Baroda State. Mystic poets, like G. H. Deshpande, A. R. Deshpande, V. N. Deshpande, and Sumant, are rooted in traditions which go as far back as Namdev and Tukaram. Old Marathi poetry abounds in mysticism, which tries to build, as it were, bridges over the unknown, and they tread in the same path as their great predecessors. Then again there is Madhav-Julian (M. T. Patwardhan), whose successful attempts to add new metres to Marathi prosody from Persian poetry are well known. Though his earlier poetry was tinged with romance akin to that found in English poetry, his later work is modelled partly on the old Sanskrit and Marathi poets and partly on Persian poets. Lastly, there is another class of poets who have not looked to the West for inspiration or guidance—the poets of patriotism, whose works pulsate with sincerity of emotion and depth of feeling. Amongst the creators of this type of poetry Savarkar, Vinayak, Tekade, and Govind are foremost.

Humour as a department or independent form of literature found no place in the earlier Marathi literary works, though there were numerous scattered passages, instinct with wit, in the writings of the saint-poets like Ekanath, Tukaram, Namdev, and others. As Marathi writers came in contact with humorists like Voltaire, Sterne, Fielding, Smollett, Molière, Cervantes, and Mark Twain, they began to imitate them in their own way. The father of modern humour may be said to be S. K. Kolhatkar, who, as he himself has admitted in one of his articles, was much influenced by Sterne, Fielding, Cervantes, and Mark Twain. He has written a number of articles and stories in which he has made humour an instrument of social reform. His chief disciple, Gadakari, was, like his *guru* (master), a social reformer, and as such made use of his pen for the purpose of propaganda against social evils. There is excellent humour also in the form of verse. In this field Mr. P. K. Atre is a pioneer; his *Zenduchi Fulen* contains a number of humorous poems tinged with satire which attack the foibles and mannerisms of a certain type of men of letters.

Criticism in its present form was unknown to old Marathi. There were, it is true, critics like Mallinath in Sanskrit, but they satisfied themselves with explaining the text rather than revealing the personality of the writer or showing where beauty lay in his writing. Modern critics are very different, owing much to Dryden, Johnson, Hazlitt, Coleridge, Ruskin, Arnold, Walter Pater, Moulton, Bradley, Brander Mathews, and Shaw. In fact, most of the modern criticism is based on the canons of English criticism. The literary productions of the past and the present are reviewed with sobriety, catholicity, and truthfulness, and criticism is becoming creative as well as expository.

Let us now turn to the influence of the English language on the Marathi language. A number of English phrases and idioms have been literally translated and are in common use. Modern Marathi has adopted so many forms of expression and this process is going on on such a large scale that the structure of the language is being modified, while hundreds of English words have crept into Marathi which modern purists find it difficult to remove. The modern system of punctuation again has been borrowed from English. Before Marathi came in contact with the English language the end of a sentence was denoted by a vertical line. The comma, semicolon, full stop, signs of exclamation and interrogation, and inverted commas—all these niceties of punctuation were unknown to old Indian writers.

What is more important is the migration of ideas. Conceptions which are either strange or unfamiliar to the people of Maharashtra (the Marathi-speaking area) obtain currency through the medium of modern literature. Take, for instance, the idea of love-marriages. Ninety-nine novels out of every hundred depict incidents which lead to love-marriages. This surely is not a true picture of Indian life, in which marriages are usually arranged by parents, guardians, or near relatives and love-marriages are a rarity. And yet our novelists, taking their cue from English novelists, delight in writing books which culminate in them, and in describing incidents which scarcely happen anywhere in Maharashtra outside the imaginary kingdom of their own creation. Then again, the ideas of liberty, equality, and reverence for women which we find in hundreds of lyrics, sonnets, short stories, and one-act plays are there as a result of the contact with English literature. Modern Marathi literature, profoundly influenced as it is by English literature and life, is in turn affecting the lives of the people of Maharashtra. The new ideas of liberty and equality are encouraging women to leave their hearths and to look to schools and colleges as a means of achieving economic independence. This awakening amongst modern women is certainly the result of the literature which they read. The cry for liberty for the individual in order to ensure his fullest growth is assuming greater and greater importance in social life, and individualism is shaking the foundations of joint-families. The Hindu joint-family was a very common institution in all the villages and towns in Maharashtra from the historical past up to the end of the nineteenth century. It is a rarity now, and in its stead small units of the 'Me and my wife' type are being established, though this is partly due to economic conditions and not solely to the contact with western culture of which literature is a part.



## IV. TAMIL

The Tamil language has been described by an eminent linguistic authority, Sir George Grierson, as the oldest, richest, and most highly organized of the Dravidian languages, cultivated from a remote period and possessing a copious literature.<sup>1</sup> Its literature is the expression of a culture which is of great, almost fabulous age and which throughout the centuries has shown a ready response to external influences, a genius for assimilation which is characteristic of the Tamil race. Of its age Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone, Governor of Madras, said in his convocation address to the Madras University graduates nearly half a century ago: 'The antiquity of the Tamils (Dravidians) was so great and hoary that compared to it the Aryan civilization appeared to be of yesterday's growth.' Of its literary heritage Dr. Winslow, an unbiased oriental scholar from the West, wrote in the introduction to his lexicon: 'It is not perhaps extravagant to say that in its perfect form Tamil is more polished and exact than Greek, and that in both dialects (literary and vernacular), with its borrowed treasures, it is more copious than Latin. In its fullness and power it more resembles English and German than any other language.'

In all its long history Tamil culture is never known to have tabooed or fought shy of the foreign cultures which successively came in contact with it. Like the northern Aryan Sanskrit, Tamil possessed a highly synthesized grammar and a wealth of literature going back to prehistoric times. Yet, unlike Sanskrit, Tamil was not exclusive, but hospitable enough to accommodate and virile enough to assimilate the foreign influences that impinged on it from time to time. Of all the ancient peoples of India the Tamils were the most tolerant, freely fraternizing with all who came by land or sea to their homeland, the Tamilnad. Early Aryan immigrants from the north, Jews and Christians from Syria, Parsis from Persia, and Mapillas (Moplahs) from Arabia all received a friendly welcome from the Tamils, who gave them not only shelter and sustenance but also full freedom and equality. It would be only natural that their language and literature should show traces of such intercourse, but actually the evidence of foreign influence is scanty, presumably because their culture had at an early age attained a standard not equalled by that of the foreigners who came into their midst. To elucidate the effects and extent of foreign influences on Tamil in the distant past is, however, irrelevant to our present purpose, which is to make a rapid review of the reactions of Tamil literature to western influences in modern times.

The European contacts with the Tamils and their language date

<sup>1</sup> *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (1907), vol. ii, p. 380.

only from the end of the sixteenth or the beginning of the seventeenth century A.D., when the Portuguese began to establish trading factories on the western seaboard. The earlier contacts of imperial Rome and of Levantine traders had been only commercial and casual. Intercourse between the static East and the progressive West began to have tangible and lasting results only when European adventurers settled among the Tamils, first for trade, then for religious propaganda, and eventually for economic and political exploitation. The early Portuguese deliberately encouraged marital alliances between their settlers and the inhabitants of the west coast, but their intercourse was primarily commercial, limited to maritime markets, and conducted mainly with mercenary motives. Hence their literary and cultural influence was practically nil, and there is little tangible evidence of any effect on Tamil literature. The only abiding marks of the relatively brief and superficial intercourse of the Portuguese with the Tamils are to be found in the few words they contributed to the Tamil tongue, such as the names of things which they brought into the country for the first time.<sup>1</sup>

Close on the heels of the Portuguese came the Dutch, followed by the French and the English. Unlike the Portuguese, their trade rivals held aloof socially from the people of the country; what is more strange, they adopted the Portuguese language as a *lingua franca* for their commercial and other dealings in Tamilnad. The culture of the Dutch and the French consequently made no impression whatever on its language or literature. The English, however, ultimately superseded all the other European commercial competitors and came to stay, at first as peaceful traders in friendly alliance with Indian potentates and territorial magnates and later as rulers of the land. They therefore naturally exerted the greatest and most lasting influence, which quickened and fertilized Tamil language and literature as no other foreign contacts except that of Sanskrit had ever done before. The effects of the impact of this, the youngest yet the most virile, European nation on Tamil may be advantageously studied under three heads, viz. (1) prose, (2) drama and fiction, and (3) poetry.

In the first place, it is only meet to mention the great impetus which Tamil received from the zeal and enterprise of a few earnest European missionaries. For propagating the Christian religion among the Tamil people its ministers felt a growing need to learn and to use the latter's language. To this end they introduced

<sup>1</sup> For instance, *annai* (pine-apple), *kayya* (guava), *pappai* (papaw), *pambuli* (pomelo), *vathu* (duck), *peengan* (china-ware), *koppai* (cup), *pathan* (button), *mejai* (table), *punal* (funnel), *chatti* (key), *penu* (pen), *haduthani* (paper), *Viviliam* (Bible), *padre* (pastor), *thuppakki* (gun), *sepoi* (soldier), *humbas* (compass), *manguram* (anchor), &c.



printing in Tamil and also started producing and circulating cheap books and pamphlets as a means of popular education. These printed paper books, so handy, novel, and inviting in contrast with the massive, costly palm-leaf manuscripts previously in use, won quick and general appreciation from the reading public. Besides supplying Christian literature to the Tamils in their own language, early ministers of the western church, in order to win the regard and reverence of the people, not only deliberately imitated Indian scholars and holy men in dress, diet, and devotional rites, but also managed to master the ancient Tamil classics and the moral aphorisms in which they are rich. They laboured to prepare primers of grammar, bring out prose books, promulgate periodicals, and compile lexicons, which they printed and published in the presses they introduced from Europe. These activities did not fail to excite and energize a creative urge among Tamil men of letters and to impel them to adopt and assimilate similar methods in order to improve and enrich their language and literature, particularly in prose.

Although prose was one of the seven kinds of literary compositions spoken of in the oldest extant Tamil grammar, *Tholkappiam*, it had little vogue in the world of Tamil scholarship till the seventeenth century A.D. Before this, the only prose works in Tamil were the immobile, if inimitable, commentaries on the antique classics, as compendious and terse as the original masterpieces themselves.<sup>1</sup> Lack of facilities and writing materials, the absence of printing-presses and cheap paper constrained men of letters generally to resort to verse and either to eschew prose altogether, or, in exceptional cases, to compress and condense it so as to save time, cost, and trouble. The introduction of paper and the invention of the printing-press not only did away with these age-long difficulties, but also provided a new impetus and momentum to prose composition, which has since expanded and rapidly multiplied, catering as it does to diverse literary needs and requirements which were hitherto unthought of or unsatisfied.

*Flos Sanctorum* or *Kiristhava Vedopadesam* which was produced at Vaippukottai in 1677 A.D., with types made by Father Gonsalvez of the Spanish Mission, was probably the first printed Tamil book. *Kiristhava Vanakam* (*Doctrina Christiana*) was printed at Cochin in 1679.<sup>2</sup> It also appears that Father Henriquez of the Jesuit

<sup>1</sup> 'Perhaps no language combines greater force with equal brevity; and it may be asserted that no speech is more close and philosophic in its expression.' P. Percival, *The Land of the Veda* (1854), p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> The question whether these two books were in Tamil or in modern Malayalam has been definitely settled in favour of Tamil by the notes left by the Rev. John Anton Sartorius of Tranquebar, in which he expressly mentions that Malabari was the then name for Tamil among the early Europeans, and that at

Mission opened a printing-press in Punnakayal in Tinnevely District in 1678, and brought out some Tamil books for circulation among the clergy. Father Ignatius Aichamani manufactured Tamil types at Ambalakkadu in 1679, and there in the same year were printed the first Tamil-Portuguese dictionary by the Rev. Antony Dubrail and a grammar of Tamil in prose by the Rev. Decosta. In the second decade of the eighteenth century the Rev. Bartholomew Ziegenbalg of the Danish Mission got some Tamil types from Halle in Germany and started printing Tamil books with a press and a paper-factory which he erected in Tranquebar on the east coast. *Paradhi-Thottam* (Garden of Paradise) and *Ghana-Kannadi* (True Knowledge), both Tamil translations of books by Father Schultz, were printed at Halle in 1749 and 1750 respectively and imported in order to further Christian propaganda.

Almost all these early Tamil books were brought out mainly, if not solely, for the purpose of religious propaganda and as a means of equipping European missionaries for their proselytizing activities. Many of them were at first only accessible to the clergy; cheap printed books were not ordinarily available to the public at large until the press and paper-factory established by Ziegenbalg at Tranquebar made it possible to extend their use both to the lay Christian and to non-Christian readers. The public demand for publications of a secular character remained unsatisfied until a press which was seized and brought from Pondicherry to Vepery (a suburb of Madras) by the English after their successful attack on the French Indian capital in 1761 offered its custom to a wider clientèle and began receiving and executing orders for printed matter from the general public. Until 1835, however, a licence from the government was required for all printing of books and paper, and licences were granted and refused at its discretion. After that year, when an Act was passed removing this measure of control, there was an unrestricted and rapid production of journals and news-sheets, printed books and brochures, pamphlets and periodicals. Their extensive circulation at once provoked and catered for a newly aroused curiosity and a positive hunger for knowledge. This Promethean gift of the printing-press by the West to Tamilnad released and gave free play to forces which at once enfranchised thought and revolutionized literature, which took directions and acquired an amplitude hitherto undreamt of.

Prior to the advent of the printing-press, Tamil suffered from a paucity of prose literature. There was, however, not a total

least one of them, *Kiristhuxa Vanakom*, was a Tamil book printed in 1679. This receives further confirmation from the fact that a copy of it in the Sorbonne University Library in Paris is in Tamil.



sterility. The potentialities of prose were recognized and perhaps were also realized, to some extent, in the prehistoric classic age of Tamil literature; for prose is not only put on a parity with poetry among the seven categories of literary compositions mentioned in that ancient grammar, the *Tholkappiam*, but is also allotted particular provinces and well defined spheres, such as histories and dramas, in the same way as specified functions and domains were assigned to other categories. There were commentaries, such as those of Nakirar on the *Kalaviyal* and of Parimel Alagar on the immortal *Kurral*, and these are unrivalled in lucidity, terseness of diction, and polish of style. But all these works, though they evince great originality, were only commentaries. Owing to the manifold difficulties and disadvantages under which authors and amanuenses laboured before the invention of printing and the introduction of paper books, prose was little tried and less developed as a vehicle for literary expression. A vast new hemisphere of prose—much vaster than the old world of poetry—remained undiscovered, but the printing-press was like a magic casement opening on new seas.

The founder of the Madura Jesuit Mission, the Rev. Robert de Nobili, hailing from a Tuscan patrician family, endeavoured to ingratiate himself with the Tamils by assuming the guise and garb of a pious Indian scholar and adopting an Indian name, Thathuva Bodhaswami. During his long career in South India (1606 to 1656), he wrote and published several prose works in Tamil, such as *Gnanopadesa Kandam*, *Atma Nirnayam*, *Satya Veda Lakshanam*, *Dhushana Dhikkaram*, *Kadavul Nirnayam*, *Thathuva Kannadi*, *Yesunadhar Charithram*, *Anithya Nithya Vithiasam*, *Prapancha Virodha Vithiasam*, and a Tamil-Portuguese dictionary. His books were perhaps the earliest in Tamil prose, but they were overloaded with ponderous Sanskrit words and idioms. He was soon followed by the more learned and talented Father Beschi, who also adopted the gorgeous dress of a Brahmin priest and assumed the Indian sobriquet 'Virama-Muni'. His versatile genius and erudition have left an indelible impress on every branch of Tamil literature. Between 1680 and 1742 he contributed to it several works which take high rank both in verse and in prose. His *Veda Ozhukam*, *Veda Vilakam*, *Thiruchabai Ganitham*, and *Gnanam Unarthal* were prose works written in a discursive and didactic vein. His *Vaman-Kathai* was a story-book of a novel character; his *Paramartha-Guru-Kathai* was, like *The Vicar of Wakefield*, a work of fiction full of instruction seasoned with humour and wit. His *Thomul Vilakam* and *Koduntamil Ilakanam* were synthesized and epitomized grammars following western models in matter, and evincing originality and daring in method.

He avoided Father Robert de Nobili's blinding passion for Sanskritizing Tamil; he is rightly called the father of Tamil prose; he was the pioneer in the field of Tamil fiction; he was also the pioneer Tamil lexicographer, compiling the first Tamil dictionary known as *Chathura Aharathy* or fourfold lexicon, which still holds the field as a standard authority. His poems will be adverted to later in the section dealing with poetry.

After Father Beschi the German missionary C. T. E. Rhenius wrote some minor prose works, of which *Veda Udharana Thirattu* deserves mention for its flowing easy style and the purity of its ideas. At a later date the Rev. G. U. Pope and Bishop Caldwell both rendered valuable services to Tamil, but their labours served more to educate western scholars about Tamil and thereby indirectly to stimulate research. So much for the direct European contributions to Tamil literature.

Turning next to the Indian talent which set to work in the trail of western scholars, there is a galaxy of authors. Thandavaraya Mudaliar of Chunampet (Madras) wrote, among other prose books, his famous *Pancha Thanthram* on the model of *Aesop's Fables*. Arumuga Navalar of Jaffna contributed several primers in prose, written in simple, chaste Tamil and full of useful information, which are still models of their kind. Saravana Perumal Iyer and Visaga Perumal Iyer also merit mention among the early prose writers. Mr. V. G. Surianarayana Sastri of the Madras Christian College staff wrote some romances and works of fiction in pure but pedantic prose. Of the numerous later writers of fiction, Mr. Rajam Iyer and Mr. Madhaviah have justly earned foremost rank. *Kamalambal* written by the former forms a standard for realistic novels. Mr. Saravana Pillai's *Mohanangi* is another realistic novel modelled on Kingsley's *Hypatia*. Mr. Vedanayagam Pillai has left many fine examples of Addisonian prose, among which *Prathapa Mudaliar Charithram* and *Sunguna Sundari* deserve special mention. *Mathi Vanan* by Mr. V. G. S. Sastri, *Pari-Thulai* or the Tiller's Daughter by Mr. Srinivasa Iyengar, and *Anbanantham* by Mr. Rajavelu Chettiar are based on more modern English models. The *Padmavathi* of Mr. Madhaviah is yet another work of realistic fiction written in racy prose.

Of more practical importance than these works is another class of books which have opened up new vistas and given glimpses of the wonderland of western science. *Bija-Ganitham* by Dr. Carroll (1855) was the first book of algebra in Tamil, *Kshetra-Ganitham* by David Solomon (1859) was the earliest Tamil geometry. *Iyarkai Porulmul* (general knowledge of natural objects) by Rhenius merits mention as the first attempt in Tamil to popularize scientific knowledge by making it available to the common reader. *Angathi-*



*Patham* by Dr. S. F. Green is a treatise on physiology which still holds its ground in its own field. The same author has also written vocabularies of modern materia medica and pharmacopoeia in Tamil, and in his *Kemistham* (chemistry) he has surveyed the modern science of the West in lucid old Tamil language. *Suka Rana Vaidyam* (a book on surgery) and *Vana Sastram* (astronomy) are modelled on up-to-date western works. Rhenius's *Bhumi Sastram* is based on Guthrie's grammar of geography. *Uлага Charithram* (1830) is an outline of general history written by Dr. Schmidt. Mr. Arnold's *Sadharana Ithihasam* (universal history) and the *Jathi Vilakam* (tribes and castes) of Mr. Charles Saviour (1857) are each the earliest standard work in their respective branches of knowledge.

Yet another field of Tamil prose was first ploughed by coulters of western make and has since yielded abundant harvests. The Tamil Press, comprising periodicals, journals, magazines, and newspapers, is an institution which has stimulated progress in every phase of social, political, and public life. It has quickened thought, leavened and moulded opinion, modernized taste, and given a fresh orientation of outlook both in and out of the world of letters. The first of its productions, a monthly magazine known as the *Tamil Pathriha*, was the outcome of missionary enterprise in 1831. It was quickly followed by the *Suvisesha Prabala Vilakam*, started at Nagercoil in 1840. About the same year the *Narpothakam* made its appearance in Palamkotta, another missionary centre. *Jana Snehan* (People's Friend) in 1841, *Dhina Varthamani* in 1856, *Sirupillai Nesathozhan* (Children's Loyal Companion), and *Balia Nesan* (Youths' Friend) of Palamkotta in 1859, *Desopakari* of Neyyur in 1861, all owed their birth to the clergy's passion for propaganda. *Viveka Vilakam* owed its origin to other motives, being started in 1865 by progressive non-Christian Tamil scholars in order to combat cramping age-old superstitions among their compatriots and build up a healthy protestant Hinduism. *Amirtha Vachani* was brought into existence in the same year in Madras as a monthly with a more mundane object, viz. to instruct and amuse the public in general and the fair sex in particular. *Swadesa Mitran*, started by the late veteran publicist Mr. G. Subramania Iyer, one of the fathers of the National Congress, did yeoman service in stimulating and shaping public opinion and in spreading light literature in Tamilnad. It is still an influential daily, maintaining the ideals and best traditions of English journalism. *Nilalochani* of Negapatam and *Sidhanta Deepika* of Madras are both philosophic and discursive journals of repute which cater to the literati. *Sendamil* of the Madura Tamil Sangam is a literary magazine comparable to the English *Review of Reviews*. In

addition to these, there are many other modern periodicals which need not be detailed in this short review.

Like prose, the Tamil drama owes its renaissance almost entirely to contact with western influences. *Kuthu* and *Natakam* (pantomimes and literary dramas) are referred to in the ancient Tamil classics and in their old commentaries, but all have been lost. Not a single play of the pre-classic periods is now extant, and no real drama was written in Tamil till new inspiration came from the West. Modern plays are now springing up thick and fast and competing with the even more prolific novels. Yet the drama and the novel in Tamil are still immature, and their future is in the making. Authors like Tagore or Madhu Sudan Dutt have not appeared to create great works of art; and there are innumerable cheap and vulgar adaptations of sensational or commonplace English novels and plays, whose structure and plots are artlessly reproduced regardless of their incongruity in Indian conditions of life. Nevertheless, ignoring these, we have some dramatic productions which do honour to creative Tamil scholarship. Professor Sundaram Pillai's *Manon-Manyam* is a well-written drama in five acts in blank verse on the model of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. An interlude in this play is an exquisite adaptation of *The Hermit*; it is not a mere translation of the English poem, but in sweetness of lyrical language and wealth of fancy as well as in philosophic outlook rivals its English original. Mr. Lakshmana Pillai's *Satyavathi* approximates to *Cymbeline* in design if not in finish. Rao Sahib Sambanda Mudaliar's comedies and farces, about a score in number, are new models deserving attention. Mr. Kallapiran Pillai has given a fine rendering of *The Merchant of Venice* in Tamil. *Rupavathi* and *Kalavathi* by Mr. V. G. S. Sastri stand out of the multitude of modern plays. The *Sarasangi* of Mr. Sarasalochana Chettiar is a drama evincing real dramatic talent which also owes its inspiration to English models. The *Mukudal-Pallu* of Saminatha Velan is of a different character, being a melodramatic opera and not a drama in the real sense of the word.

Even the realm of Tamil poetry has not escaped the fertilizing effect of western influences, though their reaction has been relatively circumscribed in scope because of the perfection which the former had already attained. Tamil metres have a wide range and comprehensiveness, and its prosody admits of an infinite variety of metrical manipulation and rhythmic harmony. It was therefore difficult for the West to give any new metres to old Tamil, as it did in the case of younger and more recently developed Indian languages, but as regards outlook and objective, as well as in technique, Tamil has profited in no small measure by its contact



with English. Father Beschi's epic *Themba Ani* was the earliest successful attempt to import biblical themes and incidents into Tamil poetry. In his *Thiru Kavalur Kalambakam*, *Adaikala Malai*, *Annai Azhungal Andhadhi*, and *Kitheri Amman Ammanai* he poured new wine into old bottles. While scrupulously, and even excessively, conforming to the orthodox technique, he worked freely on western models and effected innovations both in design and execution, in materials and make-up, which, if daring, added a new grandeur in numbers and a new vigour in ideology.

To come to later writers, Mr. Krishna Pillai's epic *Rakshanya Yatrikam* is a poetic adaptation of *The Pilgrim's Progress*; Mr. V. G. S. Sastri's monostiches, known as *Thani Pasura Thokai*, which have been translated into English by Dr. Pope, are fine imitations of Shakespeare's Sonnets; Munsif Vedanayagam Pillai's *Penmathi Malai* and *Sarva Samaya Kirthanais* are lyrical symphonies on modern themes of current interest. The extempore melodies of the later nationalist poet Bharati, entitled *Svadesa-Githams* (National Songs), touch high levels of fervid patriotic poesy. He is a product of the new dynamic nationalism which tales of Mazzini's noble passion and Garibaldi's prowess have inspired in young India. His 'soul-stirring songs', as they have been called by a staid Malayali High Court judge, are expressions of the new-born emotions and passion for freedom inspired by western ideas and advanced modern ideals; and they have helped to translate patriotism from the sphere of passion into that of a religion.

To sum up our review, the effects of western influences on modern Tamil culture have been primarily to enlarge the domain of prose and to add extensive and entirely new communes to the republic of Tamil letters, in fiction, drama, and journalism in particular. Even the anaemic languor of later poetry has been dissipated by infusions of healthy young blood, and Tamil poesy has been revitalized by the live currents from the West, which appear to have cured it of the partial paralysis that supervened in the dark ages between the thirteenth and the seventeenth centuries.

#### V. TELUGU

Telugu, which is the principal member of the Andhra group of Dravidian languages, is the mother tongue of about twenty-six million people in an area of 117,000 square miles, occupying the central portion of the east coast of South India and extending far into the interior of the country, which is comprehensively known as Andhra land. Its existence as a language can be traced back to a period as early as the first century B.C., but its first literary production, which was a translation of the Sanskrit *Mahabharata*,

dates as late as the eleventh century A.D. By then it had absorbed the vocabulary, spirit, and culture of the Sanskrit language, and up to the nineteenth century, through a continuous period of eight centuries, it looked to Sanskrit as the model of literary expression. It took more than two centuries to complete the translation of the *Mahabharata*, and that great work formed the foundation for the superstructure of later literary construction. Early Telugu scholars were invariably acquainted with Sanskrit, and the vast stores of its literature afforded material for study, imitation, adaptation, and translation. Almost all the *Puranas* were translated one after another, and the habit of translation, though discouraged, persists to this day. But one good feature about the Telugu translations is that the genius of the poet-translator often permeates the whole work, so that it reads as if it were an original composition. These *Puranas* are mostly in verse form, with prose interspersed here and there in less poetic portions. Their themes were mostly mythological and religious, but the treatment of them was highly poetical. Stories of selfless love, of filial devotion, of absorbing romance, of great heroism, and of absolute renunciation can be found in scores in these *Puranas*. Another literary type that was evolved and perfected is called the *Prabandha*. A tale of the love and wedding of lovers of high lineage, written mostly in verse interspersed with prose, with a stock plot, overdrawn and ornate descriptions, and perfunctory characterization, was the sum and substance of the average *Prabandha*. Thus, as a rough estimate, it can be said that the two standard types existing in Telugu literature before it began to be subject to western influence were the *Purana*, or mythological long story, and the *Prabandha*, or romantic tale of moderate range.

The beginning of western influence can be traced to 1800 or even earlier; two books describing the life of Christ and his teachings and explaining the doctrines of Christianity were written in Telugu in 1750 and 1780 respectively. The introduction of printing and the establishment of public schools teaching the language of the land as well as English were the starting-point of a great change in the life, manners, outlook, and culture of the average Telugu man, and the change was reflected in literature. In force, in variety of topics, in its relationship to the daily life of the people, in its ready assimilation of foreign elements, in its freedom of thought, in the abundance of its literary forms, and in its general output, Telugu literature became altogether a new literature. The change has been unique and all-pervading. The modern author need no longer be bound by convention or be hard pressed for a subject; he is not hampered by traditional literary forms but has been emancipated. He makes new ventures in the



field of metrical composition. He sings in praise of his motherland and glories in its past history. He essays romance or adapts tales of fiction from English literature. Knowledge of English has given him the key to unlock the vast treasures of western thought. At the same time he is enriched with the learning of traditional Sanskrit lore, so that he can combine the best of the East and the best of the West.

Before we examine the literary output in greater detail and appraise the effect of the West on it, we may refer to the pioneer work done by Mr. C. P. Brown, a member of the Madras Civil Service for thirty-eight years (1817-55). This was a godsend to the Telugu language and literature. As he himself said, 'the flame of Telugu literature was just glimmering in the socket' in 1824, when he first began to make a study of the language. He helped to preserve its ancient literature by printing and publishing some of its classics; the method of collecting and editing manuscripts started by him in 1826 is substantially the same as is adopted even to-day. His essay on Telugu literature published in 1838 paved the way for the biographies of poets and histories of literature written and published in later times. The dictionary of the Telugu language which he compiled between 1845 and 1853, though not the very first of its kind, is still of distinct use.

The modern period of Telugu literature may be said to have begun about the year 1880, and critics have named it the Veeresalinga age (*yuga*) after the late Rao Bahadur K. Veeresalingam Pantulu, who has a just claim to be called its father. He was a dynamic personality with vast erudition and deep insight into human nature, a man of action and of quick and energetic resolve. The influence of Raja Ram Mohan Ray and of the Bengali reaction to the new light which came from the West was strong upon him, and he was the greatest figure in the field of literary and social reform in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. 'He laid the foundation stone of modern literature and led the way in developing the latent powers of the language into harmony and perfection'. In 1878 he published the first Telugu novel, which nine years later was translated into English and received with appreciation by the English-reading public. He claims in his autobiography to have written the first novel, to have translated the first drama, to have written the first Telugu farce and satire, and to have composed the first treatise on physical science; nearly all the different forms of composition found in English literature were transplanted by him. Literature was with him not a concoction prepared from a conventional recipe. It was an implement of social reform, a means of educating the public, a record of contemporary life, and a picture of the tumultuous changes that took place in his time.

It was a whip with which he lashed the conservative elements which were an obstruction in the way of progress. His farces were full of satire, his essays were simple and instructive, his translations and adaptations have the appearance of original conception and execution. Among other works he published lectures on various subjects relating to social reform, a history of the Indian States (1894-5), and *Lives of Noble Ladies and Great Women*, the last of which includes accounts of Grace Darling, Elizabeth Fry, Lady Jane Grey, and Mary Carpenter. In 1892 he published a translation of Goldsmith's *Traveller* in verse form; he also brought out translations and adaptations of some of Shakespeare's dramas and of Sheridan's *Duenna* and *The Rivals*.

He is regarded as the originator of modern Telugu prose, though he was not actually the first to make use of it. An earlier writer, Chinnaya Suri, left a book of stories entitled *Nithichandrika* which is considered a classic; and manuscripts of a few prose works, mostly tales of romance and mythological stories, have been discovered in the Tanjore palace library, which was built up by the rulers of Tanjore between 1535 and 1835. Although, however, prose-writing was not unknown, it was held in low esteem until Veeresalingam gave it dignity; till then verse alone could bestow distinction on a writer.

The stimulus given by Veeresalingam led to an increase of literary production and an improvement in quality. Publishing houses were started, not with the idea of making a profit but with the object of enriching the literature of the land; philanthropy and patriotism were associated with literary activities. One of the first products of the publishing agencies was the 'Vijnanachandrika Series', in which useful books of many different kinds were published under the able guidance of a versatile scholar, K. V. Lakshmanarao. Later he undertook the publication of an encyclopaedia in Telugu on the model of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, but his untimely death stopped progress after the first three volumes had appeared. As paper was cheap and printing was easy, almost every town of any repute or population had its serial publications and its circle of patrons and subscribers. Since then, with the increase of the number of schools and colleges, English education has spread even into remote villages, and the writers of the day exhibit unmistakable signs of western influence in their works.

One way in which contact with the West through the medium of English literature has affected Telugu literature is in a large number of translations and adaptations, some of which make the story fit into the life and conditions of the Telugu country, though others do not. Not only the novel but also the drama, the short



story, the biography, the lyric, the satire, the essay, and almost every other kind of literary production have been imported from the West by way of translation, adaptation, or abridgement. The extended knowledge and use of English have also enabled inter-provincial contacts, as a result of which scholars have become familiar with the contemporary literature of other Indian languages. A number of works, more especially novels, have been translated or adapted from Bengali, Canarese, Tamil, Marathi, and Hindi; the modern masters of Bengali literature, in particular Rabindranath Tagore and Bankim Chandra Chatterji, have been much drawn upon to enrich Telugu. With all this, the mental horizon of writers has been enlarged. Their outlook has widened and their spirit has become more or less cosmopolitan.

Translation and adaptation are only one aspect of literary development. Another and much more important is the output of productive genius, displaying itself in originality of subject and independence of thought, as, for instance, in what is called the social novel, in which the realities of daily life are portrayed and the complex problems of society tackled. This has served as a popular method of introducing social reform; many a book can be found in which the caste system, early marriage, enforced widowhood, and the illiteracy of women are boldly attacked.

The novel is an entirely new variety of literature introduced from English; the first of its kind, *Rajasekhara Charitra*, was an adaptation of Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*. Fiction soon became popular. Much of it was merely imitative. A number of Scott's novels were translated; coming to the later years of the first quarter of this century, the sensational novel and the detective novel took the fancy of writers; a number of cheap sixpenny dreadfuls have been adapted with and without acknowledgement. The novels of Conan Doyle have been translated or adapted, and counterparts of Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson have been created and continued from one book to another as was done by Conan Doyle. The plots of Reynolds's novels have also been imitated; some of his novels have been translated, and an adaptation of *East Lynne* has been published. On the other hand, there is much original work both in plot and construction, e.g. in the novels of Chilakamarthi Lakshmi Narasimham, some of which give a picture of Telugu life in all its attractive simplicity. A versatile writer, he also produced historical novels and stories, for which Tod's *Annals of Rajasthan* provided material, and he is well known as a dramatist and humorist. The historical novel is very widely read, and almost all topics of Indian history, from the gleanings of Vedic times to the fall of the Mughal Empire, have supplied themes for writers, who have used their knowledge of

English to ransack the books on Indian history published in English in order to enrich the literature of their mother tongue.

The short story has also found considerable favour with the Telugu public and is a regular feature of magazines which have been started in imitation of the *Strand*. The chief themes are love and detection, both of western origin; one author in an English preface to his book frankly acknowledges the sources from which he has drawn, saying: 'Of late I have been reading a deal of sensational fiction, especially the writings of Edgar Allan Poe, Arthur Reave, Conan Doyle, Maurice Le Blanc, William Le Queux and others of note.' Of non-English authors, Tolstoi and Maeterlinck have received special attention.

Other branches of prose literature have in most cases been started in imitation of the West. The critical essays of K. V. Lakshmanarao and Veeresalingam had as their prototype some of the essays of Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater, and John Ruskin. These pioneers led the way and a number of followers have adopted their methods, which are now accepted as ordinary standards of Telugu writing, no one troubling to consider what was the model adopted or imitated. The *Spectator* and the *Tatler* have their counterparts in Telugu; the inimitable *Sakshi* of Mr. Panuganti Lakshmi Narasimham, and the *Vadarubothu*, hailing from Anantapur, are obvious adaptations of those English names. The constitution of the *Spectator* Club has been copied, but the author's individuality is too strong, and the social and religious conditions of the Telugu country are too unlike those of English society in the eighteenth century to make his papers servile imitations of the western originals. The humour and wit of the author are entirely different from those of Addison or Steele, and the language adopted and the situations created by him are all peculiarly suited to the manners and customs of the Telugus. Unlike the author of the *Spectator*, he not only exposes the small foibles of certain social types but often probes the depths of emotion and the springs of human action. The satire of Veeresalingam is of a more caustic type. In an adaptation of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* he successfully brought Swift's method into play, only with this difference that Swift was a misanthrope and Veeresalingam an optimist. Of more modern humorists we may mention Chilakamarthi Lakshmi Narasimham, whose foe is folly and whose weapon wit.

The literature of criticism is one of the branches of Telugu whose nature has been so completely changed that in its present form it must be regarded as a new contribution to the language. Formerly there was very little criticism except of a peculiar type. A few books were written on the lines of the treatises on *Alankara Sastra* in Sanskrit, but the aim of the critic was more or less re-



stricted to finding out whether a particular book satisfied the conditions laid down in a conventional scheme of classification. There was little attempt to examine its various aspects as a whole. The beauties of a particular verse or the propriety of a particular idea were discussed, and literary animosity, professional rivalry, or individual jealousy had free play. Now the western canons of literary criticism are applied and the authorities of western criticism are not only referred to but also quoted *in extenso*. Before the advent of English Sanskrit was the only law-giver and the treatises on aesthetics in that language were the only guides. Now the whole critical literature of the English language is at the disposal of the critic, and in his praise or condemnation of a literary production he makes use of them most freely. Recent works on the art of criticism, the standards of beauty and literary taste, the theories of dramatic technique and dramaturgy abound in references to and quotations from western authors. A lead was given by Dr. C. R. Reddi, the present Vice-Chancellor of the Andhra University, who in 1899 wrote a critical appreciation of the works of a great poet of the middle ages; this work, which was new in the field, is still read as a model estimate of an author's work. Its success was as much due to his originality as it was to his introduction of methods of interpretation. To-day an accomplished scholar is required to be proficient not only in Telugu but also in English and Sanskrit, and it is not uncommon to find a critic taking an idea or a situation from a Telugu poet and quoting parallels from Shakespeare and Kalidasa at the same time.

Other branches of prose are also slowly developing. *A Short History of the World* by H. G. Wells has been translated into Telugu; short treatises on physics, chemistry, mathematics, economics, co-operation, and other subjects of practical or scientific value are making their appearance; and with the adoption of the modern languages of India as the media of instruction in schools there is a sustained effort to increase the number of publications of an educational nature.

Journalism is another western importation, and its ever-growing popularity is introducing substantial changes into the vocabulary and style of prose, which is gaining in lucidity, facility of expression, and suitability to different demands.

Telugu drama has also been influenced to a great extent by contact with the West. In one way it might be said that Telugu dramatic literature began in 1883, when Veeresalingam published a translation of *Sakuntala* from Sanskrit, which he followed up two years later with a translation of Sheridan's *Rivals*. The form of dramatic literature which he started caught the imagination of the people, and for a continuous period of nearly fifty years every

town of any repute has had its theatre. Amateur and professional actors began to stage dramas which were sometimes translations from Sanskrit, sometimes from English, but also often original productions. But it should not be thought for a moment that the Telugu people before this time had no dramatic art. It was not entirely foreign to them. Examination of the manuscripts of the Tanjore palace library has revealed a good number of literary productions called 'dramas', though most of them do not approach either the Sanskrit or the English drama in plan of construction, characterization, or dramatic value. They were merely scenic representations of detached incidents with the accompaniment of music and dance. There was the invariable element of humour, and the story often centred about the marriage of a prince of a royal family or a god. Puranic stories were also dramatized in the same way, and the stage and its equipment were of a very simple nature. The itinerant village stage still puts on the boards the indigenous Telugu drama, which is very closely akin to the miracle or mystery plays of the sixteenth century in England.

The construction of theatres for the entertainment of large audiences and the cultivation of dramatic art for its own sake were undoubtedly due to western influence, and it is obvious that modern Telugu drama has been profoundly influenced in matter and manner, in sentiment and action by English models. Social topics are freely selected for dramatization, the problems which confront society are presented in an idealized or a realistic atmosphere, and thus the stage has become a powerful institution for the education of the public and for the guidance of public opinion. The modern form of drama began with translations from Sanskrit in 1880, before which time authors restricted themselves to a poetical rendering of Sanskrit works and made no attempt to present them on the stage, probably because actors had no social status and the stage was often in the hands of low-class people. The drama has now abandoned the classical unities of Sanskrit drama and has imbibed the freshness, vigour, and variety of topic found in English works. The stage has seen translations or adaptations of the dramas of Ibsen, Bernard Shaw, and many other European writers; the influence of Bengali literature is also evident, Dwijendralal Ray and Rabindranath Tagore being models for translation. Tragedies are prohibited in Sanskrit, and for a time this ban was observed in Telugu, but the influence of English literature proved too strong, and to-day tragedy and comedy are accepted types though tragedy is not popular. The living drama is, however, being displaced in popular favour by the films displayed in the ever-growing number of 'talkie-houses', yet another western importation.



The progressive change which we have seen in prose and drama is far less pronounced in poetry, owing no doubt to the finished form the latter had attained in pre-British days, its assured place in the heart of the people, and the strength of the traditions which it established. The Telugu classics are in a class by themselves and, as in past centuries, are the subject of continued study. There are conservative writers, the forms and subjects of whose verse reproduce those of the old *Prabandha* and *Purana*. The modern English-educated young Telugu, however, rambles into foreign fields. The works of English poets such as Byron, Shelley, Keats, Milton, and Wordsworth have been adapted. Shakespearian blank verse has created a taste for a particular variety of metre called the Telugu blank verse, which is now used extensively. The odes and the sonnets of English poets have had their effect on modern Telugu compositions, of which short poems on simple topics are a new feature, while the lyric element has received much attention.

Innovation has been the key-note of the young poets of the modern school, who have made it their object to emancipate themselves from the laws, conventional rules, and restrictions observed by poets of earlier generations, and to bring in new metres, new ideas, and new standards of value. Simple topics have been introduced such as 'the darkness', 'her eyes', 'the forest flower', 'the cuckoo'. A higher note has been struck by patriotism, the Andhra land being eulogized and the past greatness of its heroes commemorated. The cry 'This is my own, my native land' began to be raised early in the twentieth century, and it has now swelled into a chorus. The work of the modernists has a certain freshness and vigour, but the older school sees nothing good in it. It is adversely reviewed, often denounced, ridiculed, and satirized, as in a recent collection of poems (*Suklapaksham*), the author of which is himself undoubtedly influenced by Dryden, Pope, and other English satirists. Lack of scholarship, incoherence in thought, and vagueness of expression are a few of the faults laid at the door of the modern poet (*bhava kavī*), and with no little justification. There are some, however, whose writings are free from these defects and in whom western influence can be seen to the best advantage, for they combine the freedom of English literature with the strength of the indigenous culture. One point, however, has to be conceded, viz. that in certain qualities the twentieth-century Telugu poet and scholar suffer in comparison with the ancient Telugu poets. The modern scholar has widened the extent of his knowledge but he has lost in depth. The modern poet has not the same mastery of language as the ancient poets, who had metre, diction, and rhyme at their command, though there are still writers of this type who have not come under the spell of western literature.

Two more important changes must be briefly mentioned. One is the introduction of the spoken dialect, as opposed to the literary dialect, into the writings of the day. This movement was started as a result of western influence by Rao Sahib G. V. Ramamurti Pantulu, and it is gaining ground as it gathers adherents from the younger generation. There are many scholars, however, who resist the adoption of this dialect as a literary medium on the ground that it is a defilement of their pure language. The other is the change which the vocabulary has undergone as the result of the infusion of English, a change similar to that which it underwent when it first came into contact with Sanskrit. That process still continues; to-day any Sanskrit word, simple or compounded with another, can be used in a standard work in addition to the words already adopted from Sanskrit which have become domiciled. At present the Telugu language is almost gravitating to a similar position in relation to English, because, in addition to the English words already incorporated in it with the necessary phonetic changes, English verbs and nouns are freely used in the daily speech of the educated and higher classes; as has often been pointed out, the modern graduate cannot speak Telugu for a few minutes without using some English expression or other. Any acceleration of this change will tend to the transformation of the language, which will become anglicized in the same way that it has been Sanskritized, but an effective check is likely to be afforded by the spread of the spirit of nationalism.

## VI. URDU

Urdu is the most commonly used language in India. It is spoken in the greater part of the north and in some parts of the south, including the great Indian State of Hyderabad, Deccan. In other parts of the country it is more or less understood, particularly in large towns. Its literature has thus a wide appeal and its influence is spreading with the growth of literary activity in various branches of knowledge. Though as a literature Urdu is comparatively new, yet as a language it is fairly old. There is an impression abroad that the language was born in the camp of Shah Jahan at Delhi, but this is not correct, though it is not unlikely that the camp was the origin of its name.<sup>1</sup> There are many theories<sup>2</sup> as to the origin of the language. Whatever view may be finally adopted, I think I can safely associate myself with the opinion expressed on this

<sup>1</sup> 'Urdu' is a Turkish word and means a camp.

<sup>2</sup> One theory is that the language developed in the Deccan before it travelled to Delhi. Another theory propounded some years ago by Professor Mahmud Sherani of the Oriental College, Lahore, in his book *Punjab men Urdu* is that it travelled through the Punjab to Delhi.



point by Mr. Ram Babu Saksena in his *History of Urdu Literature*.<sup>1</sup> He says: 'Urdu, by origin, is a dialect of the Western Hindi spoken for centuries in the neighbourhood of Delhi and Meerut, and is directly descended from Saur Senic Prakrit. This living dialect has formed the basis of Urdu, the name being given at a later period. It retains its original and essential character in the grammar, idioms, and a large number of Hindi words.' To this warp of Hindi words was added the woof of Persian, which language was brought with them by the Mughals and the Muslim rulers who preceded them. Into the fabric thus formed by Hindi and Persian a pattern of western literature was woven when India came in contact with western nations.

The earliest contacts between India and the West were through the Portuguese and the French. A large number of words in everyday use are a legacy left by them. Words like *almari* (wardrobe), *mez* (table), *pistaul* (pistol), and *nilam* (auction), among a host of others, commemorate our contact with the Portuguese. Similarly there are a large number of French words which form a part of the Urdu language: for example, *chand mari* (*champ de Mars*), *edikang* (*aide-de-camp*), *qamis* (*chemise*), *sabun* (*savon*), and *botam* (*bouton*).

With the passing away of the influence of the Portuguese and the French came the more lasting contact with the English, and numerous English words have now found their way into the Urdu language and literature. It is difficult to form a correct estimate of the number of such words. In an article written many years ago by the late Professor Wahid-u-Din Salim it was stated that he found no less than 500 English words in the *Farhang-i-Asafia*, the well-known Urdu dictionary compiled by Maulvi Saiyid Ahmad of Delhi. It must be remembered, however, that the dictionary was published more than thirty years before Professor Salim framed his estimate. The number has grown enormously since. To form a more up-to-date estimate of the words of the English language that are current in Urdu to-day, the *New Urdu Dictionary* compiled by Maulvi Abdul Haq (Aligarh), a distinguished educationalist of Hyderabad and the Secretary of the Anjuman-i-Taraqqi-i-Urdu, should be consulted. I think more than 1,000 words would be a modest estimate. Most of these are in common use, like school, company, doctor, rail, ticket, &c. In addition to these simple words, there are many which relate to modern inventions and for which there were no names in the language before. Sometimes efforts are made to coin new words by way of translation, but such efforts are not very successful nor very popular. There are also words relating to politics and civic institutions which have been adopted by writers in Urdu journals

<sup>1</sup> *A History of Urdu Literature* (Allahabad, 1927), p. 1.

and periodicals and by speakers on political platforms, as for instance council, parliament, president, vote, ballot, &c.

The influence of English is observable not only in the additions that it has made to the vocabulary of Urdu but also in the adoption of western methods of expression. Translations like 'the angle of vision', 'the point of view', 'the method of approach' come into vogue through the medium of English. But this tendency to borrow phrases from English is not always conducive to simplicity or elegance.

The coming in of new words and expressions has been mentioned first as this is the form which the influence of the English language on Urdu took to begin with, but the influence that counts for much more is that on the style of Urdu, on its prose, on its poetry, and on its drama. It will be convenient to discuss these influences one by one.

Before the nineteenth century there was hardly any prose literature in Urdu. Earlier prose writings were either religious tracts or books of old-world stories. About the middle of the nineteenth century books like the *Pisana-i-Ajaib* and the *Bagh-o-Bahar*, the *Dastan-i-Amir Hamza*, the *Talism-i-Hush Ruba*, and the *Bostan-i-Khiyal* were published. The first two have long served as text-books for British officials desiring to qualify for proficiency in Urdu, while the other three are voluminous stories which have furnished food for more imaginative reading, as they relate the adventures of heroes who defeat giants guarding fairy castles and deal with talismans and the wonders effected by their use. Judged by later standards the style of these books is artificial and stilted, but they were no small achievement at the time at which they were written.

Strangely enough, the idea of developing Urdu prose first sprang up at Calcutta, a place far removed from the two famous homes of Urdu, that is, Delhi and Lucknow. Dr. John Gilchrist, who was Principal of the Fort William College at Calcutta, has been called by some the father of Urdu prose. At any rate, the credit of having recognized the importance of the language at that early stage belongs to him. He compiled a dictionary and a grammar of Hindustani (a popular synonym for Urdu) for the use of western students and attracted round him a large number of Indian scholars from Delhi and the North-Western Provinces (now known as the United Provinces). Among them was Mir Amman Dehlvi, who produced *Bagh-o-Bahar*, a translation of the Persian work *Chahar Darvesh* of Khusrâu. Many other translations from Persian and other languages were made by Hindu and Muslim scholars employed in the Fort William College under Gilchrist and his successors. However, their work was a prepara-



tion, as it were, for what followed. The first writer of standard Urdu prose is the famous poet Ghalib of Delhi. Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan and the devoted band of his fellow workers, like Nazir Ahmad and Hali Shibli belonging to the Delhi school of Urdu literature and Pandit Ratan Nath ('Sarshar')<sup>1</sup> and Maulvi Abdul Halim ('Sharar') of the Lucknow school, completed the superstructure on the foundation laid by Ghalib. He was the first to discover the charm of good Urdu prose. Like all cultured people of his day he used to write letters to his friends in Persian, but about the middle of the nineteenth century he adopted Urdu as the medium of his correspondence. He wrote as if he was talking to the friends to whom he was writing. His letters have been fortunately preserved and published in a book called the *Urdu-i-Mualla*. They are of great value for their beautiful style as well as for revealing the mind of the author and furnishing reliable information as to his life.

It is remarkable that the prose of Ghalib does not owe its beauty to western influence, but that cannot be said of the masters of Urdu prose who followed him. The contact of Saiyid Ahmad Khan with the British was intimate. He served under the British government as a judicial officer before he devoted his time and his talents to making modern education popular among the Muslims of India. When he founded the famous college at Aligarh, which has now developed into a Muslim University, he secured for it the services of several distinguished Englishmen, including the late Mr. Beck, Mr. (afterwards Sir Theodore) Morison, and Mr. (afterwards Sir Thomas) Arnold. He influenced these scholars and they influenced him. In his writings he introduced a clear and simple method of expression, shorn of exaggeration and ornament, relying on reasoning more than rhetoric for effect. In his well-known periodical called the *Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq* appeared contributions from his pen and those of his collaborators which had great influence on the minds of his contemporaries. His coadjutors in this literary effort were many; among them the late Muhsinul Mulk may be specially mentioned. The latter was a most eloquent and persuasive orator. His speeches showed what great heights can be reached by Urdu oratory, and that it can compare favourably with the most advanced languages of the world when used by a skilled speaker. Muhsinul Mulk did not know English, but in his old age he picked up just a little of it so that he could follow the purport of a newspaper in English if it was read out to him.

<sup>1</sup> Here and elsewhere in this chapter pseudonyms are shown in inverted commas. Urdu writers borrowed from the poets of Persia the practice of using a *nom de plume* (known in Urdu as *takhallus*) instead of their proper names. Some modern authors have used part of the latter as the *nom de plume*, e.g. Saiyid Akbar Husain wrote as 'Akbar' and Sir Muhammad Iqbal as 'Iqbal'.

One of the most distinguished fellow-workers of Sir Saiyid was Maulvi Altaf Husain ('Hali'), a pupil of Ghalib, who made his name as a poet but also ranks high as a writer of simple and effective prose. An essay on literary criticism forms a long preface to his poetical *Divan*, and I think it is likely that he made himself familiar with a translation of Matthew Arnold's *Essays on Criticism* before writing it. His other prose works are *Hayat-i-Jawid* and *Yadgar-i-Ghalib*. In all these writings there are indications of western influence, though he did not know English.

Another scholar who worked with Sir Saiyid and received a great deal of inspiration from him was Shibli. He was an intimate friend and colleague of Sir Thomas Arnold when the latter was a professor at Aligarh. Shibli's favourite subject was biography, and the best of his many biographical books is the *Sirat un Nabi*, a life of the Great Prophet of Islam, in writing which he employed western methods of research. Another valuable book of his in Urdu is the *Shirul Ajam*, a history of Persian literature. He had absorbed all that is good in western literature without having studied it, through translations and personal contacts with western scholars.

Before I pass on to the Lucknow school of Urdu prose, the works of Maulvi Nazir Ahmad of Delhi deserve special mention. He is known both as a good writer and an eloquent speaker. His mastery of the Urdu language was undoubted, and he has the distinction of being the first to have reproduced the language used by the ladies of Delhi in their homes. He knew English and must have been influenced by its literature in many ways, but it is noteworthy that he kept the language of his books as pure as possible, with the least possible mixture of English words or expressions. Most of his books were written for women and are very popular among them. They are equally popular among men. One of them, the *Miratul Uru*s (The Bride's Mirror), has been translated into English by the late Mr. Ward of the Indian Civil Service.

In the Lucknow school of prose writers the two names that stand out prominently are 'Sarshar' and 'Sharar'. Both were novelists and both rendered valuable service to Urdu literature. They knew English, and in their writings western influence is directly visible. 'Sarshar', who belonged to a Kashmiri Pandit family in Oudh, wrote a number of novels, but the book that made him famous was the *Fisana-i-Azad*, a lengthy story in four volumes, with an imaginary hero called Azad. The influence of Dickens is observable in this novel. The author was probably inspired by Dickens to reproduce the speech of the common people with their peculiar accent and pronunciation and with their mistakes of idiom or grammar. Another feature of the book is the



great resemblance between Don Quixote and his squire Sancho Panza, on the one hand, and Azad and his attendant, Khoji, on the other. 'Sarshar's' books are full of wit and humour. The line which Abdul Halim ('Sharar') took was very different. He adopted Sir Walter Scott as his model and wrote a large number of historical novels. One of his best-known works relates to the time of the Crusades and describes the love of a Christian princess and a Muslim hero. Some of his novels are translations or adaptations of Sir Walter Scott's novels. Hakim Muhammad Ali, another novelist of Lucknow, wrote several novels imitating the style of 'Sharar'. Mirza Muhammad Hadi ('Ruswa'), who was a professor in the Christian College at Lucknow, has also written many readable novels in Urdu. It is curious that the novels have been produced mainly by Lucknow, while the stories from the pen of the writers in Delhi are of a didactic nature. The stories of Nazir Ahmad have nothing thrilling about them and have an obvious educative purpose. Maulvi Rashid Al Khairi, who followed the style adopted by Nazir Ahmad, developed not only a serious but a melancholy vein and thus earned for himself the sobriquet of *Musawwir-i-Gham* or 'the Painter of Sorrow'. Among the living writers of excellent Urdu prose in Delhi may be mentioned the name of Khwaja Hasan Nizami, who has an attractive style of his own showing a good deal of western influence, though he has never been to a school or college conducted on modern lines and is not acquainted with English except through translations or through association with men who have received a western education.

Another famous prose writer whose writings have unmistakable indications of western influence but whose education was purely eastern was Maulvi Muhammad Husain ('Azad'). He was a Delhi man but worked for the greater part of his life at Lahore; he is the founder of a school of writers at Lahore, which is now regarded as one of the centres of Urdu literature. Colonel Holroyd, who was at the head of the Education Department of the Punjab when 'Azad' was employed in it, proved a good friend of the Urdu language and inspired 'Azad' with zeal for introducing western ideas into Urdu literature. The *Nairang-i-Khyal* by 'Azad' is an interesting allegory; his *Qisas-i-Hind* is a fine collection of stories from Indian history; the *Darbar-i-Akbari* is a series of pen-portraits of the distinguished men at the Court of Akbar, the greatest of the Mughal emperors. The books written by him were in a style not known before in Urdu literature and were influenced by his contacts with western scholars. His language, however, retained all its purity notwithstanding these contacts.

The store of Urdu prose had been added to considerably by

translations of a large number of well-known English books. They are mostly works of fiction, but many books of a more serious nature have also been translated. Among those whose translations have been specially appreciated, Maulvi Zafar Ali Khan of Lahore and Mr. Inayatullah Khan of Delhi deserve a high place. The former translated Draper's *Conflict of Religion and Science*, Curzon's *Persia*, and Kipling's *Jungle Book*. The latter was for many years at the head of the translation bureau established by His Exalted Highness the Nizam at Hyderabad in connexion with the Osmania University, where the experiment of imparting the highest education in arts, philosophy, and science through the medium of Urdu has been tried with success.

Among the numerous works of fiction translated into Urdu may be mentioned the novels of Scott, Lytton, Dickens, and Rider Haggard. Some of Tolstoi's works have also been made accessible to the Urdu-reading public, and many French novels have been brought within their reach, in some cases by direct translations from the French by Indians familiar with that language. A writer whose books show considerable French influence is Saiyid Sajjad Hyder ('Yeldram'), but he has got this influence indirectly through Turkish literature, which he reads and admires. A very interesting book which was translated direct from the French by a famous Indian savant, the late Saiyid Ali Bilgrami, is the *Civilisation des Arabes* by M. Le Bon. It bore the title *Tamaddun-i-Arab* and had a good sale in spite of its being an expensive book; a cheaper reprint of it was published at Hyderabad in 1937.

Of late there has been a marked increase in translations of works on the newest political ideologies of the West such as those of Nietzsche, Kant, Bergson, and Karl Marx. It need hardly be stated that books dealing with the lives of these western thinkers are eagerly read by the younger generation and are deeply influencing their views. Another modern feature is the favour shown to detective stories; many have been translated from English, and some original stories on the same lines have been produced. The art of writing short stories is also developing fast, and the last two decades have produced many young writers of promise.

The branch of writing which has been influenced by the West more than all others is journalism. Newspapers and magazines are a modern growth in India. The printing-press came to India from the West and has been one of the chief stimulants to progress. Journalism began as a natural corollary to the introduction of the press, and from small beginnings Indian journalism has grown into a weapon of great power. There are many newspapers written in English by Indians which are considered effective on account of the facility with which their opinions attract the attention of the



officials of the British government, but their range of influence is limited. As instruments of propaganda, journals written in Urdu or other Indian languages are much more effective and are gaining greatly in strength and circulation. With a few remarkable exceptions these journals suffer from one defect so far as their language and style are concerned. They import too freely idioms and forms of expression peculiar to English and other European languages which are alien to the genius of Urdu, and which must be used sparingly and with discretion if its beauty is to be preserved.

Literary magazines have played an important part in the progress of Urdu prose. Among them the *Dilgudaz*, the *Maarif*, the *Makhzan*, the *Zamana*, the *Adib*, the *Nigar*, the *Adabi Dunia*, the *Nairang-i-Khyal*, the *Humayun*, and the *Shahkar* may be specially mentioned. Two or three of them have ceased to exist, but the work they aimed at continues with unabated zeal. Many of the existing magazines are illustrated, and in get-up and appearance they can bear comparison with many of the magazines in western countries. They also bring out annuals and special numbers from time to time, attractive in appearance as well as in the informing nature of their contents.

In connexion with journalism the work of periodicals intended for women must also be mentioned. The *Tahsib-i-Niswan* of Lahore is perhaps the oldest of such papers, and has rendered a great service to the cause of women's education and progress. It was followed by the *Khatoon* of Aligarh and the *Ismat* of Delhi. Another ladies' journal, also called *Khatoon*, which is published in Bombay, has done useful work in making Urdu popular in the Bombay Presidency. A promising addition to women's magazines is the *Anis-i-Niswan* of Delhi, which has recently come into the field.

Journals for children also owe their origin to the example of the West and are conducted on lines similar to those of children's magazines in western lands. *Bachchon ka Akhbar* in Lahore was a pioneer in this department. It was followed by many others, of which may be specially named the *Phul*, which has had the longest life and enjoys considerable popularity among the young.

Humorous writing, in the modern sense of the word, is also an imported plant in the field of our literature. A newspaper called the *Oudh Punch* was started at Lucknow by the late Munshi Sajjad Husain, who was a brilliant humorist and gathered round him many contributors who wrote in the same vein. It had a remarkable success for many years. Unfortunately it is no longer in existence, but it has left behind it a demand for humorous writing, to meet which many of the Urdu dailies of the present day have a special column reserved for wit and humour.

Having seen how different kinds of Urdu prose have been affected by contact with western literature, let us examine its effect on Urdu poetry. It began about the same time as the influence on prose, that is, the middle of the nineteenth century. The earliest poems on modern lines were written and recited at the meetings of a literary society which was formed at Lahore, by 'Azad', under the patronage of Colonel Holroyd, to whom reference has already been made. Hali, who was connected with the Punjab Education Department for a short time, was also a member of this society. The members wrote poems describing the beauties of nature and tackling social problems. Their great predecessor Ghalib had felt the urge to go to a wider sphere, beyond the narrow confines of the Urdu *ghazal*,<sup>1</sup> when he wrote:

The narrow courtyard of the *ghazal* is not wide enough for my desire;  
For the expression of my thought a wider sphere is needed.

He died, however, before carrying this idea into practice, and it was left to his pupil Hali and to 'Azad,' a pupil of Zauq, to give effect to his wish.

Saiyid Akbar Husain ('Akbar') of Allahabad carried still farther the work which 'Azad' and Hali had started. He had received an English education and imbibed many new ideas, but the use he made of this knowledge was in favour of a retention of the spirit of the East. He was not prepared to purchase material advancement at the expense of spiritual values. He advised his countrymen that they should not allow themselves to be dazzled by the glamour of western civilization and that they should adhere to the precious traditions bequeathed to them by the sages of the East. He was fond of humour and used his talent for satire with great effect against those who were ready blindly to imitate the West. He knew how to introduce English words in his verses so that they would fit in with their Urdu setting. Some other writers, not gifted with his artistic skill, have tried to imitate him in this respect, but not with the same success. A poem showing 'Akbar's' command of the Urdu language is his beautiful translation of Southey's well-known poem 'The Waters of Lodore'.

The contact of the East and the West found its most remarkable expression in the writings of the eminent poet-philosopher Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal, who combined oriental scholarship of a high order with a profound knowledge of the literature and philosophy of the West. He occupies a unique position in Urdu poetry. He wrote a number of excellent poems in Persian as well, which furnish an important basis of his international fame. Any reference

<sup>1</sup> A kind of lyric used for the expression of detached thoughts on different subjects. It had a limited number of verses; each line had the same metre, and the endings of each rhymed.



to the merits of his Persian poems would be out of place here, as we are dealing with Urdu literature, but it is fortunate that we have in the *Bang-i-Dira*, the first collection of his Urdu poems, the seeds of the thought developed later in his Persian poems. In his later Urdu poems, which were published after the works in Persian, the themes dealt with in the latter were practically repeated. We can therefore form a fair idea of the trend of his thought from his Urdu works.

The principal themes dealt with by him are:

- (a) The importance of the 'individual' and the need of developing the great potentialities of the 'Ego' or the 'Self' in man.
- (b) The high position of man in the scheme of the universe and the unlimited possibilities of his further rise to perfection.
- (c) The necessity of the guidance of the spirit to control man's material progress, which threatens disaster if left uncontrolled.
- (d) A warning to the nations of the West of the disastrous consequences which will ensue if they continue to advance on purely materialistic lines.
- (e) A warning to the nations of the East in general, and to Muslims in particular, to remember their spiritual eminence.

The difficult task of conveying such philosophic ideas in words full of rhythm and beauty has been accomplished by Iqbal with marked skill. He has dealt with other subjects, such as love and the beauties of nature, with equal success. The western influence on his writings was not derived only from English literature. He had also other contacts with the Occident. He knew the German language and resided in Germany for some time. He also visited France, Italy, and Spain. His philosophy was coloured by his study of Nietzsche and Bergson, but at heart he remained a mystic with ideas attuned to those of the Persian Sufis, and his dominant note is abhorrence of the materialism of the West.

Limitations of space do not permit of an account of the work of some of the younger poets, many of whom are making valuable contributions to Urdu literature. I would mention only two of them, as they represent two distinct phases of western influence. They are 'Hafiz' Jalandhari and 'Josh' Malihabadi.

The peculiarity of 'Hafiz' (pronounced Hafeez) is that he has given descriptions of the picturesque life of India and her customs in very simple language, the music and the flow of which have an enchanting effect on the reader. Following an old Indian practice, he often recites his poems in public assemblies and attracts vast crowds. He has had no education in English, and it was not till 1938, when he visited England and France and picked up a little

English, that he first came into direct contact with the West; but he was instinctively affected by the modern influences which he gathered from the atmosphere around him.

'Josh' Malihabadi, who belongs to Lucknow but now has adopted Delhi as his head-quarters, is conversant with English literature and is a powerful writer. His poems, like those of 'Iqbal', represent a reaction against the West, particularly on the political side. He is a strong Nationalist and often assails imperialism as well as capitalism. A strong anti-religious bias is also visible in many of his latest poems.

A brief reference to blank verse is necessary before passing on to Urdu drama. This form of verse is a direct result of western influence, and efforts have been made from time to time to introduce it in Urdu, but it cannot be said that they have been successful. Specimens of this type of verse were given by Abdul Halim ('Sharrar') in the *Dilgudaz*, but they did not catch the popular fancy and the preference for the measured rhymes of Urdu verse on orthodox lines is still strong in India.

Turning to dramatic literature, it is interesting to note that the drama as an art was known in ancient India, just as it was known in ancient Greece. There were dramatic performances in the courts of ancient Hindu kings, but, with the vicissitudes of fortune and amid frequent foreign invasions, the drama fell into disuse and lost its status. By the time the contact with western nations began, the only traces of its past existence were to be found in itinerant companies of dancers and actors, called *Rahs Haris*, or in the annual pageants of the heroic deeds of Ramchandra and Lakshman at the celebrations of the Dasahra festival.

A revival of the taste for dramatic literature and theatrical performances began at Lucknow in the reign of Wajid Ali Shah, the last king of Oudh. About the year 1851 Saiyid Agha Hasan ('Amanat') wrote the *Indar Sabha*, a story of the court of the fabulous Raja Indra, where beautiful fairies danced and sang for the delectation of the Raja, whose domain was guarded by formidable giants and to which no mortals were admitted. The play was acted in Lucknow under the auspices of Wajid Ali Shah. It is said the King himself acted in it the part of Prince Gulfam, the mortal who was smuggled into the court of Indra by the fairy who had fallen in love with him.

'Amanat' is known as the father of the modern drama in India, at least so far as Urdu is concerned. His play was perhaps the first to be performed on the stage in Bombay, which is the centre of India's dramatic activities. The stage in India owes much of its progress to the enterprise of the Parsis of Bombay, who formed dramatic companies and acted important parts in them. They



employed Hindu and Muslim poets from Upper India to translate English dramas or to write new plays for them. Raunak of Benares and Husaini Mian Zarif were among the earliest drama writers and were followed by authors like Saiyid Mehdi Hasan ('Ahsan') of Lucknow and Vinayak Parshad ('Talib') of Benares. The two latter greatly improved the language of the Urdu drama. The author who rose to the highest place in dramatic literature was Agha Hashar, whose admirers called him the Indian Shakespeare. He translated several dramas of Shakespeare and also wrote many original works.

The Urdu drama has developed more on the lines of the opera, probably because the *Indar Sabha* was an operatic play, and the first producers of dramatic performances on the stage felt that the inclusion of singing would prove a great attraction to Indian audiences. The plays written by the authors mentioned above consist of prose as well as poetry. The prose is more or less rhymed and jingling and does not sound like a natural talk between dramatic characters. The poems are meant to be sung. According to the practice that has prevailed hitherto, every play must ordinarily have a buffoon, whose gestures and talk provoke laughter and who comes on to entertain the audience after the more serious or moving episodes, or holds their attention while changes of scene are being effected. This artificial technique, however excusable from the point of view of the necessities of stagecraft, has restricted to a large extent the growth of the Urdu drama on natural lines, and for this reason it has not always been able to fulfil the function of 'holding a mirror' to society, which is one of its main uses.

Translations or adaptations of a large number of Shakespeare's plays are available in Urdu. Among others *Hamlet*, *The Tempest*, *Julius Caesar*, *Cleopatra*, *Henry the Fifth*, and *Romeo and Juliet* have been acted on the Indian stage. Lytton's *Night and Morning* was transformed into *Lail-o-Nahar* by 'Talib' of Benares. *Harish Chandra*, by the same author, was a work drawn from Hindu sources, which were also used in 'Hashar's' dramas.

At the present day useful work is being done by a number of writers; but progress is being adversely affected by the introduction of the cinema 'talkies', and it is difficult to say what the future has in store for dramatic art in Urdu. Western countries also have been similarly affected by the invention of the talking picture, but as the drama in those countries had attained a great degree of perfection centuries ago, it still displays a great deal of vigour. Perhaps in India the energy that could have been devoted to the improvement of the drama will now be spent on improving the standard of the stories written for the screen.

The brief survey given above does not purport to be an exhaustive account of all the influences of the West on Urdu literature, but it will, I hope, convey some idea of the extent of that influence. Writings dealing with subjects like nationalism, democracy, socialism, and internationalism, and with the conflict between capital and labour, show how deeply the trends of thought in India have been affected by modern western notions, the effect of which spreads from the literature of the people to their life.



## CHAPTER XV

### INDIAN INFLUENCE ON THE WEST

THE cultural interactions of India and the West go back to remote times. Despite the silence of classical authors, it is wellnigh impossible to avoid the conclusion that Greek thought, from Pythagoras to Plato, was influenced by parallel developments among the Hindus. The link was the Persian Empire, and as early as 517 B.C. the Emperor Darius I employed a Greek mercenary named Scylax of Caryanda to explore the Indus. The next step was the invasion of the Punjab by Alexander the Great in 327 B.C. Alexander's schemes for the hellenization of the East were frustrated by his premature death, but the Mauryan emperors remained on very friendly terms with the Greek rulers of Antioch and Egypt, and the Greek ambassador Megasthenes from the court of Seleucus Nicator resided for some years at Pataliputra. Further intercourse between India and the West was facilitated by the semi-hellenized rulers of the Gandhara and adjoining districts of the northern Punjab, the Sakas, Indo-Parthians, and the Kushans. The Kushans were on intimate terms with the Roman governors of Asia Minor, with whom they traded extensively, and in the reign of the Emperor Trajan, the frontiers were only six hundred miles apart. They sent embassies to Rome, and restruck Roman *aurei*; the Kushan king Kanishka is represented on his coins as seated on the curule chair, and he even took the title of Caesar. The Saka, Parthian, and Kushan rulers employed Hellenistic craftsmen to decorate their Buddhist buildings. In this way arose the Gandhara or Indo-Greek school of sculpture, which was responsible for the evolution of the classical Buddha image.

Farther south, the discovery of the regular currents of the monsoon winds in the Indian Ocean in the first century A.D. brought Alexandria nearer to India than it ever was again until the nineteenth century. Alexandria was the great meeting-place of East and West. On her quay-sides Indian and Greek merchants rubbed shoulders, and in her porticoes Buddhist monks exchanged ideas with Neoplatonic philosophers. The influence of Buddhist and Hindu thought upon the development of Christianity through this source was very marked. After the overthrow of Alexandria in A.D. 642, Persia, first under the Sassanian rulers of Jundeshpur and afterwards under the Caliphs of Bagdad, became the clearing-house of ideas. Hindu works on astronomy, mathematics, and medicine in this way found their way to Cordova, and from Cordova to the Christian universities of medieval Europe.

Perhaps the most remarkable phenomenon is that of the migration of fables. Some of them were carried by wandering tribes like the gipsies, by Greek and Byzantine traders, and by the Mongolian invaders of eastern Europe. As early as the sixth century B.C. *Aesop's Fables* were known in Ionia. In the sixth century A.D. the Sassanian King Chosroes Nushirvan had a translation made into Pehlevi of the Sanskrit work known as the *Panchatantra* or Five Chapters. This was entitled *Kalila and Dimna*, from the names of two jackals in one of the stories. From this a version was made in Arabic, and from the Arabic the stories found their way to Europe, where they are constantly cropping up. The Caliph al Mansur, for whom the Arabic translation was made, was a contemporary of Abdur Rahman, who ruled in Spain and was only a little anterior to Charlemagne. The way therefore was open for the stories to penetrate into the seats of western learning. A German version, *Das Buch der Beispiele der Alten Weisen* (1483), was one of the earliest printed books, and not only deeply affected German literature, but was translated into Dutch, Danish, and Icelandic. Sir Thomas North, using an Italian translation, introduced the fables to Elizabethan England, and from him Shakespeare borrowed the two apologues of the Three Caskets and the Pound of Flesh. In 1678 La Fontaine published his *Fables*, which he ascribed to the Indian sage Pilpay or Bidpai (*Vidyapati*, Master of Wisdom). Max Müller, in a charming essay, traces the story of Perretta, *La Laitière et le Pot au Lait*, to its far-off Indian source. Perretta, carrying her milk-pail on her head to the market, has day-dreams of selling her milk, buying a hundred eggs, selling the chickens, and bartering them for a cow and a calf. The calf kicks its legs, and so does Perretta. The milk is spilt, and Perretta only hopes she may escape a beating from her husband. In the Indian version, the pretty Perretta, *cotillon simple et souliers plats*, is a stupid Brahman, who has cooked a mess of rice which he hopes to sell at a profit, and thinks he will eventually marry a rich wife. He dreams of giving his wife a beating, and waving his stick, breaks the pot and the rice is spilt. Another example is found in the story of Cinderella. Cinderella is Suvarnadevi, the Hindu princess who dropped her slipper into a lake. It was found by a fisherman, who presented it to the Prince Ugrabahu, who falls in love with the unknown wearer and employs all sorts of means to trace her.

Apart from beast and fairy stories, we have another class of tale, stories of the type exemplified by the *Arabian Nights*. The *Arabian Nights* contain a vast number of tales derived from Hindu, Greek, and Persian sources, probably collected at Bagdad in the time of the great Caliph Harun al Rashid, to whom many of them refer. These tales found their way to Europe through Spain, and



appear in various guises in collections like Boccaccio's *Decameron*, which became a veritable quarry for succeeding writers. Chaucer's

Story of Cambuscan bold,  
That owned the virtuous ring of glass,  
And the wondrous horse of brass  
On which the Tartar King did ride,

is a case in point. The horse of brass is actually a horse of ebony, and the story of the *Cheval de fust* reached Chaucer by way of the French romances. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries various translations, English and French, of the *Arabian Nights* appeared. The earliest was Galland's *Mille et Une Nuits*, published in 1704. In England, Lane's *New Translation of the Tales of a Thousand and One Nights* appeared in 1839, and was followed half a century later by Burton's full-blooded version, which created a *succès de scandale* in the 'eighties. Thanks chiefly to Galland and Lane, Aladdin, Sinbad the Sailor, and other characters from the *Nights* have now become stock figures in European literature.<sup>1</sup>

Indian influence upon the fine arts of medieval Europe is an obscure subject. Two musical instruments, the violin and the cross-blown flute, appear to be of Indian origin, and the same is claimed for the *solfeggio*. One is tempted to compare the Christian Basilica with the Buddhist Chaitya cave, and Indian *motifs* have been traced in Gothic sculpture, in the carvings in the cathedrals of Bayeux, Aachen, and Trier, the throne of Maximian at Ravenna, and in an ivory diptych of Anastasius in the Louvre. Professor Strzygowski<sup>2</sup> compares the curious masonic background in the Ajanta cave frescoes, which appears to take the place of rocks and hills, to similar backgrounds in the Ravenna mosaics, and he traces both back to Mazdaism. Hellenism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism all had points of contact in Central Asia, and he thinks that the landscape which is traceable in the art of all the countries round Iran is of Mazdaic origin. It may be found as early as the Pompeii mosaics and as late as Albrecht Dürer and Leonardo da Vinci. He also thinks that Persian miniature painting influenced through Spain the art of the illuminated manuscripts of medieval Europe.

The rise of Islam circumscribed but did not put an end to intercourse between India and the West. India produced spices,

<sup>1</sup> It would be of interest to trace the 'Legacy of Islam' in European literature. Its influence is, naturally, more felt in France, but in England Fitzgerald's translation of the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyám had a great effect. In a smaller way, poems such as Leigh Hunt's *Abou Ben Adhem* and Matthew Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustam* may be mentioned.

<sup>2</sup> *Influences of Indian Art* (India Society, 1925), pp. 19 ff.

pepper, a variety of medicinal drugs and perfumes, woven stuffs of cotton and silk, beryls, pearls, and ivory, all of which were in request in medieval Europe. Alfred the Great is reputed to have sent two Saxons, Sigehelm and Athelstane, to the tomb of Saint Thomas at Mylapore in token of his thankfulness for the defeat of the Danes, though it is possible that they got no farther than the Apostle's shrine at Edessa in Syria. The Crusades, by bringing East and West into closer contact, whetted men's appetites for oriental luxuries, and the Popes were anxious for the conversion of the East. Edward I sent an envoy to Tabriz in 1292 with the object of inquiring whether there was a market for English broadcloth in Asia, and about the same time a brave Franciscan Friar, John of Monte Corvino, found his way to the coast of Malabar and brought back stories of palm-trees which yielded green nuts like gourds, sugar, and a juice like wine, cinnamon-bark growing on bushes like laurels, and ginger. The inhabitants, he said, were olive-skinned, lived on milk and rice, and avoided strong drink. Friar Odoric, who reached Surat in 1325, speaks of suttee, of the sacred cow, the Parsi fire-worshippers, the black and white Jews of Malabar, the pepper-vines, and, in Ceylon, of Adam's Peak with its famous footprint. Further information was obtained by the Dominican Friar Jordan about the same time.

The carrying trade was in the hands of the two rival Italian republics, the Genoese and the Venetian. Marco Polo, the Venetian, visited Kuyal at the mouth of the Tamraparni river in the Tinnevely district in 1288 and again in 1293. Another Venetian, Nicolo dei Conti, has left a record of his impressions of the Hindu empire of Vijayanagar; but the greatest of all the early travellers was Ludovici di Varthema, who in the course of his extensive wanderings in the beginning of the sixteenth century travelled all down the coast of western India. To no one was Europe of that day more indebted for its knowledge of the East than to this illustrious explorer.<sup>1</sup> He gives an amazingly accurate account of the Jains, with their animal hospitals and their gentleness towards all living creatures, and wisely opines that, if they were baptized, they would be saved by virtue of their works, 'for they would not do to others that which they would not others should do unto them'. He visited the court of Sultan Muhammad Begarah, the famous 'King of Cambray' whose

daily food

Was asp and basilisk and toad,

and was the author of the stories about his enormous appetite, his colossal strength, his immunity from poison, and his power to

<sup>1</sup> *Travels*, ed. Badger, Hakluyt Society.



kill a suspected person by merely expectorating upon him. He saw a Yogi who went on a yearly pilgrimage accompanied by his wife and children, tame monkeys, parrots, cheetahs, and falcons, and a host of about four thousand devotees. He visited the court of the Muslim Adil Shah, ruler at Bijapur, and, like Conti, was almost stunned by the splendour of Vijayanagar, then at the zenith of its magnificence. But the most interesting part of his book is the picture he gives of Calicut. Calicut, thanks to the pepper trade, was immensely prosperous, and the Zamorin or Raja was covered with jewels. Round his waist he wore a jewelled belt 'which cast a lustre dazzling everyone's eyes', and his throne, his palanquin, and his domestic utensils were of gold. Varthema was immensely struck with the system of government and the administration of justice, and he gives an extremely interesting account of the ritual at the chief temple in the city.

The most crying need of medieval Europe was for pepper. In an age when sugar, tea, coffee, mustard, and other condiments were unknown, pepper assumed an all-important place in domestic economy. It was used for mulling wine, for medicinal purposes, and, especially, for preserving the meat which was pickled every autumn for winter consumption. It was the determination of the Portuguese to break the monopoly held by the Genoese and Venetians which led them to undertake the long and arduous series of explorations of the African coast, culminating in the discovery of the Cape route and the arrival of Vasco da Gama off Calicut on 20 May 1498. In 1510 the Portuguese decided to seize the port of Goa in the Bijapur territory, and this they developed into the capital city of their eastern possessions. 'Golden Goa' soon became renowned for the magnificence of its churches and palaces, and here, in a splendid shrine, reposed the body of Saint Francis Xavier, the Apostle of the Indies and friend of Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Order of the Society of Jesus, to members of which Europe is so deeply indebted for her knowledge of the languages and customs of the peoples of India and the East. Students of Indian history will not need to be reminded of the mission of Father Ridolfo Aquaviva and his companions to the court of Akbar and of its consequences, or of the other valiant missionaries who penetrated into the fastnesses of Tibet and brought back the first Tibetan dictionary. Of the pioneer work of the Jesuits in the discovery of Sanskrit we shall speak presently.

The first Englishman to reside in India was the Jesuit Father Thomas Stevens, who fled from the Elizabethan persecution, took orders, and went out to Goa in 1579. His letter to his father, published by Hakluyt, was one of the factors which led to the foundation of the East India Company. Among the many adventurers who

found their way to Goa was Luíz de Camoens, who went out as a common soldier and in 1572 wrote his famous epic *Os Lusíadas* (the Portuguese), which begins with the voyage of Vasco da Gama round the Cape of Good Hope and ends with the heroic defence of Diu by João de Castro in 1546. Montesquieu declared that it combined the charm of the *Odyssey* and the magnificence of the *Aeneid*. Richard Burton, who spent many years in translating the poem, remarks upon the extraordinary faculty of the writer, like Boccaccio, to reflect the *Lux ex Oriente*. 'There is the perfume of the East in everything he writes; we find in his song much of its havock and all its splendour . . . only they who have personally studied the originals of his pictures can appreciate their perfect combination of fidelity and realism with fancy and idealism.'

Another work which had a powerful influence on European relations with India was the *Itineratio* of the Dutch traveller Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, who went out to Goa in 1583 and stayed there for five years. These and other early travellers found worthy chroniclers in Richard Hakluyt and his disciple Samuel Purchas, who between them collected and published every document of geographical value which they could lay hands on.

Theory was translated into action when two prominent merchants, Richard Staper and Sir Edward Osborne, the Lord Mayor of London, decided in 1583 to send a deputation to the Emperor Akbar armed with a letter from Queen Elizabeth. The party of four<sup>1</sup> set out by the overland route via Aleppo on Shrove Tuesday 1583. They sailed on the *Tyger*, a ship which regularly plied between London and Tripoli. Twenty years later the First Witch in *Macbeth* says

Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' the *Tyger*.

It would be out of place to describe here the adventures of the little band—their arrest by the Portuguese and their escape from Goa owing to the kindness of their compatriot, Father Stevens, their arrival at Agra, and their interview with the Great Mogul. The story has been vividly told by the only survivor, Ralph Fitch,<sup>2</sup> who returned in 1591 after reaching the mouth of the Ganges and visiting Bassein, Pegu, and Malacca, and making inquiries about the route to China and Japan. Fitch's report led to the foundation of the East India Company in 1599. In 1607 a sea-captain named William Hawkins was sent out to arrange with the Mughal authorities for opening a trading factory at Surat. Nothing could be more entertaining than Hawkins's account of his adventures at the court of the Emperor Jahangir, with whom his knowledge of

<sup>1</sup> John Newbery, Ralph Fitch, William Leedes, and James Storey.

<sup>2</sup> His and the other accounts will be found in Sir W. Foster's *Early English Travellers in India* (1921).



Turkish enabled him to carry on some sort of conversation. They found a common interest in the wine-cup, but owing to the jealousy of the Portuguese Jesuits, who were firmly established at Agra, not much in the way of tangible results was achieved.

After the establishment of the English factory at Surat, a regular Indian travel-literature sprang up. The Rev. Henry Lord, one of the Company's chaplains at Surat, wrote a pamphlet entitled *Display of Two forraigne Sects in the East Indies* in 1630, which contains the earliest English account of the Parsis and Hindus of Gujarat. In 1696 the Rev. John Ovington published his *Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*,<sup>1</sup> which is a most entertaining book, abounding in observations of Indian life, religious observances and manners. Nahum Tate in his prefatorial poem justly observes:

You have so lively your discourses writ,  
We read and voyage with you as we sit,  
When you hoise sail and reach the Indian shore,  
The real scene could scarce delight us more.

After this travellers to India in the seventeenth century were numerous. Some of them were unofficial, like that eccentric individual, Thomas Coryat, 'the Oldcombian leg-stretcher', who tramped on foot from his Somerset home to Agra, only to die at Surat of a surfeit of sack in 1617, or Dr. John Fryer, the surgeon, who came out to the East in 1672 and wrote *A New Account of East India and Persia*.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps, however, the most important work of the time was the *Journal of Sir Thomas Roe*.<sup>3</sup> Sir Thomas Roe sailed for India in 1615, accompanied by his chaplain, the Rev. Edward Terry, in order to negotiate a regular trade agreement between the English government and the Emperor Jahangir. He left in 1619. His own account of his embassy and his chaplain's *Voyage to East India* are the most considerable works on the period which we have. Roe's detailed account of Mughal India as he saw it, of the elaborate ceremonial at the royal court, and of the economic condition of the country, are of the utmost value to the historian.

As Sir Thomas Arnold remarks,<sup>4</sup> it is impossible for us in the twentieth century to recapture the thrill of wonder and delight with which our ancestors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries read the accounts of the court of the 'Grand Mogul' which travellers in India brought back to Europe. The *Thousand and One Nights* were as yet unknown to the Christian world, and descriptions of the riches and magnificence of Akbar and his descendants gratified that sense of the marvellous and the grandiose

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Rawlinson (1929).

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Crooke, Hakluyt Society.

<sup>3</sup> Ed. Foster, Hakluyt Society.

<sup>4</sup> *Court Painters of the Grand Moguls* (1921), p. 1.

which is so readily awakened by tales of the gorgeous East. Prester John and other oriental potentates who had filled so large a place in the imagination of the Middle Ages had become well-nigh forgotten, and the lively interest aroused in geographical discovery assured for the reports of merchants, ambassadors, missionaries, and other visitors to the East an eager audience. Sir Thomas Roe was the first of a long series of travellers in India whose works quickly attracted attention, for the interest which his and similar narrations awakened had all the charm of novelty.

On one great mind Roe's description of the Mughal court reacted powerfully.<sup>1</sup> When we read Roe's striking picture of his first audience with the Emperor: 'high on a gallery, with a canopy over him and a carpet before him, sat in great and barbarous state the Great Mogul': it is tempting to conjecture that it inspired John Milton's picture of Satan sitting exalted

High on a throne of royal state, which far  
Outshone the wealth of Ormuz and of Ind.

Nor was Roe by any means Milton's only source of inspiration. From Gerard's *Herbal* he took his description of the banyan tree beneath which Adam and Eve took shelter after their expulsion from Paradise:

They chose  
The figtree, not that kind for fruit renowned,  
But such as, at this day to Indians known,  
In Malabar or Decan spreads her arms,  
Branching so broad and long, that in the ground  
The bended twigs take root, and daughters grow  
About the mother tree, a pillared shade,  
High over-arched, with echoing walks between.  
There oft the Indian herdsman, shunning heat,  
Shelters in cool, and tends his pasturing herds  
At loop-holes, cut through thickest shade.

Sonorous Oriental place-names had a particular attraction for Milton, and he uses them with powerful effect when he makes Adam in his vision survey

the destined walls  
Of Cambalu, seat of Cathaian Can,  
And Samarchand by Oxus, Temir's throne,  
To Paquin of Sinaean kings, and thence,  
To Agra and Lahor of Great Mogul.

Milton had evidently read Hakluyt and Purchas to good purpose, but there is reason to think that much of his knowledge was

<sup>1</sup> See the leading article in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 31 March 1933, and the letter from Sir William Foster in the next number. Also H. G. Rawlinson, *British Beginnings in Western India* (Oxford, 1921), p. 19.



gleaned, especially after his blindness made reading no longer possible, from conversations with travellers like Roe and Methwold, the latter a scholarly man who was President of the Surat Factory from 1633 to 1639. It has been remarked that he never makes a mistake in the pronunciation of Indian proper names, such as Malabar, Deccan, Lahore, as he might easily have done if his information were taken merely from books. He describes phenomena such as mirages ('a fleet descried hangs in the clouds') and the 'equinoctial winds' or monsoons. Many of his references seem to be inspired by contemporary events. Thus, when he speaks of the East Indiamen as 'close sailing from Bengala', he appears to have in mind the terrible famine of 1633, which temporarily transferred the Company's trade from western to eastern India. The mention of Ormuz may be traced to the capture of that famous stronghold from the Portuguese by the Anglo-Dutch fleet in 1621, vividly described in Herbert's *Travels*. There is nothing intrinsically improbable in this. The Miltons were a London family and must have had acquaintances among the members of the East India Company, and John Milton, in his capacity as Latin Secretary, had many dealings with the Directors. His grandson Caleb Clarke by his daughter Deborah went out as a schoolmaster to Madras.

The first English drama on an Indian subject was Dryden's *Aurangzeb* (1675). Though of little historical value, it shows the vivid interest which was being taken by English people in the Mughal empire. About the same time appeared in France valuable accounts written by two eminent French travellers, François Bernier and Jean Baptiste Tavernier, the first translations of which came out in English in 1684.<sup>1</sup>

Hitherto, the western world had regarded India as the empire of the Great Mogul. The ancient literature of the Hindus, which was destined to exercise such a profound influence over European thought in the nineteenth century, was as yet a closed book. A knowledge of Sanskrit was difficult to acquire, as the Hindu pandits were unwilling to impart their sacred lore to outsiders; the ancient prohibition against teaching the Vedas to Sudras was still operative. But a few people, mostly Jesuit fathers, had begun to make a study of the Indian vernaculars, and through them, had obtained a knowledge of Sanskrit. A book entitled *L'Exour Vedam* (Yajur Veda), compiled by the missionaries at Pondicherry, found its way to Europe and made a deep impression on Voltaire. A Jesuit named Hansleden, c. 1732, compiled the first Sanskrit grammar,

<sup>1</sup> Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire, 1656-1668* (ed. Constable, 1891); Tavernier, *Travels in India* (trans. Ball, 1889).

the year of his death, he brought out a translation of the *Manava Dharma Sastra*, or Laws of Manu, the greatest and most comprehensive of the Hindu legal codes. Jones was not only a scholar but a poet, and some of his fine hymns to the Hindu deities deserve to be rescued from an unmerited oblivion.

Wrapt in eternal solitary shade,  
Th' impenetrable gloom of light intense,  
Impervious, inaccessible, immense,  
Ere spirits were infus'd or forms display'd,  
BREHM his own Mind survey'd,  
As mortal eyes (thus finite we compare  
With infinite) in smoothest mirrors gaze:  
Swift, at his look, a shape supremely fair  
Leap'd into being with a boundless blaze,  
That fifty suns might daze.

In 1786 Jones made a startling announcement to the Asiatic Society.

'The *Sanskrit* Language, whatever be its antiquity, is of wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either. Yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of the verbs and the forms of the grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong, indeed, that no philologer could examine them all without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which perhaps no longer exists. There is a similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the *Gothick* and the *Celtick*, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the *Sanskrit*; and *Old Persian* might be added to the same family.'

In this way he laid the foundations of the science of comparative philology afterwards developed by Bopp, Max Müller, and Grimm. Europe owes the study of phonetics to the ancient *Sanskrit* grammarians whose work thus became known to the West.

The mantle of Sir William Jones fell upon H. T. Colebrooke, the greatest of all the early Orientalists, who arrived in Calcutta in 1762 and started in 1797 those epoch-making studies of Hindu law, philosophy, grammar, astronomy, and religion which adorn the pages of *Asiatic Researches*. In 1805 he gave the world the first account of the Vedas, hitherto jealously concealed by the pandits from European eyes.

Meanwhile one of the East India Company's servants named Alexander Hamilton happened to be in Paris in 1802, when hostilities broke out between Napoleon and the English, and was detained there for three years. He spent his time in instructing some of his fellow-prisoners in *Sanskrit*, and this brought him into contact with A. L. de Chézy, the first Professor of *Sanskrit* at the



Collège de France, who had taught himself unaided except for the help of English works and Duperron's manuscripts. Chézy and Hamilton were responsible for teaching the brothers Friedrich and August Wilhelm von Schlegel, who in turn imparted their knowledge to Germany. A further step was made by Chézy's successor, Eugène Burnouf. Up to this time students had confined their studies mainly to classical Sanskrit. Burnouf extended his range of investigations to new domains, the Avesta hymns of the ancient Iranians and the language and literature of the Buddhist scriptures.

But the study of Sanskrit in England languished until the arrival in London of a young student of the name of Friedrich Max Müller. Max Müller had studied at the feet of Burnouf in Paris, where he also met Dwarkanath Tagore, a member of the great Bengali family associated with the foundation of the Brahmo Samaj. Even then Max Müller was filled with an ambition to accomplish what was destined to be his life's work, the publication of a text and translation of the Rig-Veda. 'It was in 1845', he tells us in his preface, 'when attending the lectures of Eugène Burnouf, that my thoughts became fixed on an edition of the Rig-Veda.' Max Müller settled down at Oxford and struggled with his task for thirty years, contending against poverty, neglect, and detraction in a manner truly heroic. When at last it was finished, his feelings were like those of Gibbon when he wrote the last lines of the *Decline and Fall*.

'When I had written the last line of the Rig-Veda and Sayana's Commentary, and put down my pen, I felt as if I had parted with an old, old friend. For thirty years scarcely a day has passed on which my thoughts have not dwelt on this work, and for many a day, and many a night too, the old poets of the Veda, and still more their orthodox and painstaking expositors, have been my never-failing companions.'

Max Müller was well aware of the importance of the work he had accomplished.

'The Rig-Veda, though for the last 3,000 years it has formed the foundation of the religious life of India, has never before been rendered accessible to the people at large, and its publication will produce, nay, has already produced, in India an effect similar to that which the first printing of the Bible produced on the mind of Europe. Beyond the frontiers of India also the first edition of the oldest book of the whole Aryan race has not been without its effect, and as long as men value the history of their language, mythology, and religion, I feel confident that this work will hold its place in the permanent library of mankind.'

He had done for the Vedas what the Alexandrian scholar did for the text of Homer. But he effected far more than this. He brought about a revolution in thought which may well be compared

to that accomplished by Charles Darwin in the physical world. The study of the Vedas led him to the twin sciences of comparative philology and comparative religion.

'If I were asked', he once said, 'what I considered the most important discovery of the nineteenth century with respect to the ancient history of mankind, I should answer by the following short line:

Sanskrit Dyaus Pitar = Greek Ζεύς πατήρ = Latin Juppiter = Old Norse Tyr.'

It rudely dispelled the belief that Hebrew was the primitive language of mankind and that the diversity of tongues on earth was the result of the divine punishment inflicted on the builders of the Tower of Babel, and it led to an entire reorientation of our views of the origin of religious ideas. But Max Müller did more than this. Throughout his life he strove, often with indifferent success, to combat the narrow and bigoted views of missionaries and others about Hinduism, and to make English people feel something of the greatness of the majestic civilization of ancient India. His life of the Hindu saint Ramakrishna was one of his many attempts to interpret the East to the West. Another was a little book entitled *India, What can it teach us?*, which might well be put into the hands of Indian administrators to-day. He also edited *The Sacred Books of the East*, translated by various scholars, in fifty volumes, and published by the Oxford University Press. This great work enabled the western world to have a first-hand account of the Hindu, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Muslim, and Chinese scriptures.

The question of the influence of India upon the Romantic Revival in both German and English literature is one of great interest and complexity. Through the Schlegels the Germans acquired romantic and often exaggerated ideas about Indian wisdom, the Vedas, and the *Muttersprache*. Schlegel broke into a paean of ecstatic praise on first reading the *Bhagavad-gita*, that noble poem in which Krishna expounds to the warrior Arjuna the Hindu theories of caste, Yoga, and the destiny of the soul.

'Magistrorum reverentia', writes Schlegel, 'a Brachmanis inter sanctissima pietatis officia refertur. Ergo te primum, Vates sanctissime, Numinisque hypopheta! quisquis tandem inter mortales dictus tu fueris, carminis hujus auctor, cujus oraculis mens ad excelsa quaeque, aeterna atque divina, cum inerrabili quadam delectatione rapitur—te primum, inquam, salvere jubeo, et vestigia tua semper adoro.'

<sup>1</sup> 'Respect for their teachers is looked upon by the Brahmanas as the most sacred of duties. Therefore, O prophet most holy, interpreter of the Deity, author of this poem, whatsoe'er thou art styled among mortal men, by whose oracles the mind is rapt away amid feelings of inexpressible delight into the realms of all that is lofty, eternal, and divine—thee, I say, I salute, and worship at thy feet.'



Rückert revealed to the ordinary reader the beauties of Indian poetry, and Goethe was immensely attracted by Forster's translation of *Sakuntala*. It inspired him to write his well-known lyric:

Willst du die Blüthe des frühen, die Früchte des späteren Jahres,  
Willst du was reizt und entzückt, willst du was sättigt und nährt,  
Willst du den Himmel, die Erde, mit Einem Namen begreifen;  
Nenn' ich, Sakuntala, Dich, und so ist Alles gesagt.

Wouldst thou the young year's blossoms and the fruits of its decline,  
And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted, fed,  
Wouldst thou the earth and Heaven itself in one sole name combine?  
I name thee, O Sakuntala! and all at once is said.

The remarkable Prologue of *Faust*, in which the author, stage-manager, and clown converse, is modelled on the prologue of the Sanskrit drama. Kalidasa's poem, the *Meghaduta* or Cloud Messenger, in which the banished fairy sends a message by the passing clouds to his wife, inspired the passage in Schiller's *Maria Stuart*, in which the exiled queen implores the clouds to carry a greeting to the land of her youth. German lyric poetry down to Heine is full of echoes of Hindu thought and imagery.

Contemporary English writers seem on the whole to have known little or nothing about the Hindu philosophy which stirred Germany so powerfully. Yet Shelley, Wordsworth, and Carlyle are full of unconscious traces of the *Vedanta*, which reached them indirectly through German or Platonic sources. In his *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* Wordsworth gives expression to his belief in the pre-existence of the soul. Shelley's *Adonais* is conceived in the spirit of the Upanishads. And how nobly the doctrine of the *Atma* or World Soul is expressed in Wordsworth's

Something far more deeply interfused  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round Ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky and in the mind of man;  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things.

This is the Jain belief that not only men and animals, but also plants, minerals capable of growth, air, wind, and fire possess souls (*jiva*) endowed with varying degrees of consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

More direct was Indian influence upon the Transcendental Movement in America, which started mainly as a protest against New England Puritanism. Its prophet was Emerson, and its high priestess Margaret Fuller, who was one of the founders of the Transcendental Club and the editress of its organ, *The Dial*.

<sup>1</sup> See the Acharanga Sutta, *Sacred Books of the East*, xxii. 3-5.

Emerson had studied the ancient scriptures of India in translations, and these have left a deep mark upon his prose and poetry, so that his friend H. D. Thoreau declared that 'the pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred stream of the Ganges'. His essay on 'The Over-Soul' is evidently inspired by Indian philosophical ideas. The soul comes from the Infinite and to the Infinite it returns. Emerson's pantheism is finely expressed in his poem *Brahma*:

If the red slayer thinks he slays  
Or if the slain thinks he is slain,  
'They know not well the subtle ways  
I keep, and pass, and turn again.  
Far or forgot to me is near,  
Shadow and sunlight are the same.  
The vanished gods to me appear  
And one to me are shame and fame.  
They reckon ill who leave me out;  
With me they fly, I am the wings;  
I am the doubter and the doubt,  
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The opening lines recall a passage in the *Katha Upanishad* which has been translated:

The slayer thinks he slays, the slain  
Believes himself destroyed, the thoughts of both  
Are false, the soul survives, nor kills, nor dies.<sup>1</sup>

Indian literature also attracted the notice of Americans not affected by the Transcendental Movement, as may be seen from J. G. Whittier's poem, *The Brewing of Soma*:

The faggots blazed, the caldron's smoke  
Up through the greenwood curled,  
'Bring honey from the hollow oak,  
Bring milky sap', the brewers spoke,  
In the childhood of the world.  
The morning twilight of the race  
Sends forth these matin psalms,  
And still with wondering Eyes we trace  
The simple prayers to Soma's grace  
That Vedic verse embalms.

Of poems written in another vein may be mentioned the once-famous *Lalla Rookh* of Thomas Moore (1817), an 'Eastern Romance' in the style popularized by Byron. *Lalla Rookh* is a kind of Arabian Nights Entertainment—a series of stories recited by a young poet to the daughter of the Emperor Aurangzeb in order to

<sup>1</sup> See M. Monier Williams, *Modern India and the Indians* (1879), p. 249.



beguile the tedium of a journey from Delhi to Kashmir. The princess is going to Kashmir to become the bride of the Prince of Bokhara, but on the way she succumbs to the charms of the handsome young bard. The party arrives at its destination; the bride goes to meet her betrothed, and he turns out to be none other than the young story-teller himself, who had adopted this novel disguise in order to woo his future spouse! As the notes reveal, Moore took infinite pains to get the correct local colour by the study of all available authorities. But he had never been to India, and his description of the 'Vale of Kashmere', where

The music of prayer from a minaret swells,  
And the Magian his urn, full of perfume, is swinging,  
And here at the altar, a zone of sweet bells  
Round the waist of some fair Indian dancer is ringing,

is full of absurdities. As a later critic remarked, it is only oriental in the same sense that the Brighton Pavilion is oriental.

References to Indian subjects in Victorian poetry are rare on the whole, but Tennyson, in addition to his stirring ballad on the Siege of Lucknow, wrote a remarkable poem entitled *Akbar's Dream*. He describes the Emperor's attempts

To gather here and there  
From each fair plant, the blossom choicest grown,  
To wreath a crown, not only for the King,  
But in due time for every Mussalman,  
Brahmin and Buddhist, Christian and Parsee,  
Through all the warring world of Hindustan.

It ends with a noble Hymn to the Sun:

Shadow-maker, shadow-slayer, arrowing light from clime to clime,  
Hear thy myriad monarchs hail thee monarch in their woodland rhyme,  
Warble bird and open flower, and men below the dome of azure,  
Kneel adoring Him the Timeless in the flame that measures Time!

Hindu philosophy exercised a considerable influence upon the poets of the Celtic Revival, especially W. B. Yeats and A. E. Russell, who were first attracted to the East through theosophy, which had a great vogue in Dublin in the nineties.

'A. E.' says in one of his letters:

'Goethe, Wordsworth, Emerson, and Thoreau among moderns have something of this vitality and wisdom, but we can find all they have said and much more in the grand sacred books of the East. The *Bhagavad-gita* and the Upanishads contain such godlike fulness of wisdom on all things that I feel the authors must have looked with calm remembrance back through a thousand passionate lives, full of feverish strife for and with shadows, ere they could have written with such certainty of things which the soul feels to be sure.'

<sup>1</sup> J. Eglington, *A Memoir of A. E.*, p. 20.

Among 'A. E.'s' works are poems entitled *Oversoul*, *Krishna*, *The Veils of Maya*, *Om*, and an *Indian Song*. The description of the child Krishna is charming:

I paused beside the cabin door and saw the King of Kings at play,  
Tumbled upon the grass I spied the little heavenly runaway.  
The mother laughed upon the child made gay by its ecstatic morn,  
And yet the sages spake of It as of the Ancient and Unborn.

The *Indian Song*, too is of great beauty:

Shadow-petalled, like the lotus, loom the mountains with their snows:  
Through the sapphire Soma<sup>1</sup> rising such a flood of glory throws  
As when first in yellow splendour Brahma from the Lotus rose.<sup>2</sup>

The poetry of W. B. Yeats includes *Anushaya and Vijaya*, *The Indian upon God*, and *The Indian to his Love*. Shortly before his death he published a free rendering of some of the Upanishads in conjunction with Sri Bhagawan Purohit. Another writer who shows traces of oriental influence is John Stuart Blackie (1809-95), the Scottish philologist and poet, whose poem *Trimurti* says:

Brahma is the great Creator,  
Life a mystic drama;  
Heaven and Earth and living Nature  
Are but masks of Brahma.

Anglo-Indian literature is really a subject in itself. The Company's servants, military and civil, were on the whole far better suited for their work than was the case with the 'competition-wallah' of a later generation, thanks to the thorough oriental training they received at Haileybury and Addiscombe. Cadets came out while they were still young enough to be adaptable, after a thorough grounding in Persian, Hindustani, and Indian law. There was plenty of leisure, and the scarcity of European society made them seek their recreation in the society of Indians. Many works of first-rate historical importance were written by men with personal experience of the events they described. One of the earliest was Robert Orme, 'the English Thucydides', whose *Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan* (1763-78) was praised by Macaulay. Wilks's *Historical Sketches of Mysore*, Grant Duff's *History of the Mahrattas*, Mountstuart Elphinstone's *History of India*, and Mill's *History of British India* are deservedly regarded as classics, but the palm must be given to James Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, a magnificent work, in which the heroic legends of Rajput chivalry are appropriately enshrined.

<sup>1</sup> The moon.

<sup>2</sup> The quotations are taken from 'A. E.'s' *Collected Poems* by the kind permission of the author and the publishers, Messrs. Macmillan & Co.



Of Anglo-Indian poets, by far the most considerable was Sir Edwin Arnold (1832-1904), who, more than any other single writer, has enabled the ordinary reader to realize the beauties which lie hidden in the ancient literature of the Hindus. As an interpreter of the East to the West he stands unsurpassed. As Principal of the Deccan College in Poona, the old capital of the Peshwas, Arnold had an unrivalled opportunity of studying Sanskrit at the feet of the Brahmin pandits. His most important work was *The Light of Asia*:

The Scripture of the Saviour of the World,  
Lord Buddha, Prince Siddhartha styled on earth,  
The Teacher of Nirvana and the Law.

This, more than any other work in the English language, has served to popularize Buddhism in the West. Published in 1884, it raised a storm of abuse among bigoted Christians, but this did not deter it from having an immense vogue in both Britain and America.

His translation of the *Bhagavad-gita*, *The Song Celestial*, contains some noble renderings of the sonorous eloquence of the Sanskrit original:

Never the spirit was born; the spirit shall cease to be never;  
Never the time it was not; End and Beginning are dreams!  
Birthless and deathless and changeless remaineth the spirit for ever;  
Death hath not touched it at all, dead though the house of it seems!

In a different vein is his rendering of the Indian Song of Songs, the poet Jayadeva's luscious lyric on the loves of Krishna and the Milkmaids:

One, with star-blossomed *champak* wreathed, woos him to rest, his head  
On the dark pillow of her breast so tenderly outspread,  
And o'er her brow with roses blown she fans a fragrance rare,  
That falls on the enchanted sense like rain in thirsty air;  
While the company of damsels wave many an odorous spray,  
And Krishna, laughing, toying, sighs the soft spring away.

Sweetest of all that temptress who dances for him now,  
With subtle feet which part and meet in the Rās measure slow,  
To the chime of silver bangles and the beat of roseleaf hands,  
And pipe and lute and viol, played by the woodland bands,  
So that, wholly passion-laden, eye, ear, sense, soul o'ercome,  
Krishna is theirs in the forest; his heart forgets his home.

Unfortunately, this sympathetic spirit does not permeate the bulk of Anglo-Indian literature. Colonel Meadows Taylor is one of the few of the earlier prose-writers of note who deliberately writes from the Indian point of view. His earliest work, *The Confessions of a Thug*, is a classic. *Seeta*, *Tara*, and *A Noble Queen* are

romances in which Indian heroes and heroines occupy the stage, and the scenes are drawn from the history of the Deccan, where the author spent the last part of his life. To the vast majority, India, with its poignant recollections of that great central tragedy, the Mutiny of 1857, was the 'Land of Regrets'. The phrase was coined by the most brilliant of the Anglo-Indian versifiers, Sir Alfred Lyall.<sup>1</sup> Lyall stood at the parting of the ways. He saw the stamping out of the last flames of rebellion and the imposition of the *Pax Britannica* on the land. Was it an unmixed blessing? The Old Pindaree, with his memories of

The streak of the pearly dawn, the flash of the sentinel's gun,  
The gallop and glint of horsemen, who wheeled in the level sun,

did not think so. There is a fine irony about Lyall's poetry. Two little vignettes of Delhi in 1876, when cannon and trumpet were proclaiming Queen Victoria *Kaisar-i-Hind*, give the inner feelings of two typical spectators. The first is the Hindu ascetic on the banks of the Jumna:

Fanciful shapes of a plastic earth,  
These are the visions that weary the eye,  
These I may scape by a luckier birth,  
Musing, and fasting, and longing to die.  
When shall these phantoms flicker away?  
Like the smoke of the guns on the wind-swept hill,  
Like the sounds and colours of yesterday:  
And the soul have rest, and the air be still.

The other is the voice of the race we dispossessed:

Hardly a shot from the gate we stormed,  
Under the Moree battlement's shade;  
Close to the glacis our game was formed,  
There had the fight been, and there we played.  
Lightly the demoiselles tittered and leapt,  
Merrily capered the players all;  
North, was the garden where Nicholson slept,  
South, was the sweep of the battered wall.  
Near me a Musalman, civil and mild,  
Watched as the shuttlecocks rose and fell;  
And he said, as he counted his beads and smiled,  
'God smite their souls to the depths of hell.'

It is interesting to observe the extent to which the contact with India affected social and political life in England after the battle of Plassey. The English and other Europeans in India began to

<sup>1</sup> O sombre and solemn Noverca  
The Land of Regrets.



ape the manners of the Indian princes, and after their return, they took their customs with them. Colonel Kirkpatrick, Resident at Hyderabad, 'married a Muslim lady of rank, spoke Persian like a gentleman, and in manners and costume could hardly be distinguished from a Muslim noble'. Much the same could be said of Sir David Ochterloney, Resident at the Court of Delhi, General Claude Martin at Lucknow, and many others. Those who survived the climate 'shook the pagoda tree' to good purpose, and on retiring to England spent the enormous fortunes they had acquired in erecting palatial country houses and buying pocket-boroughs. Their unlimited means enabled the 'Nabobs', as they were called, to practise bribery on a scale which shocked even that corrupt age. 'The Indian phalanx', declared Sheridan, 'those Swiss guards of Eastern peculation, had openly declared they would overthrow the last administration; nay, these Eastern lords went so far as to declare they could carry any point by money.' The 'nabob', with his daily ablutions, his hookah, his love for madeira and punch, curry and pilau and chutney, his pyjamas or 'mosquito-drawers', his native servants and his strange jargon, became a general object of ridicule. In Henry Mackenzie's *Influences of the Neighbourhood of a rich Asiatic* (1785), we are told, 'Our barn-door fowls, which we used to say were so fat and well tasted, we now make awkward attempts, by garlic and pepper, to turn into the form of curries and peelaws; and the old October we were wont to brag all our neighbours with none of my family will condescend to taste since they drank Mr. Mushroom's India Madeira.'

Macaulay stigmatizes the Nabob as a gentleman with a tawny complexion, a bad liver, and a worse heart. He depicts General Richard Smith, the most notorious of them, as 'an Anglo-Indian chief, dissolute, ungenerous and tyrannical, ashamed of the humble friends of his youth, hating the aristocracy yet childishly eager to be numbered among them, squandering his wealth on panders and flatterers, tricking out chairmen with the most costly hothouse flowers, and astounding the ignorant with jargon about rupees, lacs, and jaghires'. General Smith was the original of Sir Mathew Mite in Samuel Foote's play *The Nabob*, which was put on at the Haymarket in June 1772 and nearly earned the author a cudgelling for his temerity. On the whole the Nabobs deserved the bad name they acquired, and the transactions of some of them, like the notorious Paul Benfield, became a byword. The attacks in the House of Commons on Clive and Hastings by Burke, Sheridan, and others were dictated partly by humanitarianism, but also, one suspects, by political motives. Many expressions found their way into the English language from India in the eighteenth and nineteenth

<sup>1</sup> J. Halzman, *The Nabobs in England* (New York, 1926).

centuries; the Duke of Wellington is credited with having introduced 'I don't care a twopenny damn', the *dam* being a copper coin of infinitesimal value. They have been collected in that great glossary of colloquial Anglo-Indian words and phrases, Yule's *Hobson-Jobson*. Others, like 'bungalow', 'chit', 'blighty' (*vilayati*), and so forth, came mainly in the wake of Tommy Atkins or his great interpreter, Rudyard Kipling.

As time went on, the conception of India as a sacred trust rather than a source of commercial prosperity began to grow. The Company became more and more conscious of the responsibilities of the great empire which they had acquired. In 1804 Lord William Bentinck laid it down as a cardinal principle that British greatness was founded on Indian happiness, and twenty years later Sir Thomas Munro, one of the most eminent of the Company's servants, regarded our rule as a temporary expedient, to be gradually withdrawn as Indians became sufficiently enlightened to frame a regular government for themselves and conduct and preserve it. These views were shared, not only by liberal politicians like Macaulay, but by the great Governor-General Lord Hastings, who maintained that 'it would be the proudest boast and most delightful reflection of England that she has used her sovereignty towards enlightening her temporary subjects so as to enable the native communities to walk alone in the paths of justice'. Parallel with this idea of service arose the practice in certain English families of sending a member to the ranks of the civil services or the Indian Army. Kipling has asserted that 'if there were but a single loaf of bread in India, it would be divided among the Plowdens, the Trevors, the Beadons and the Rivett Carnacs: certain families serve India generation after generation, as dolphins follow in line across the open sea.' The list might be enlarged almost indefinitely; it should certainly include the Bechers, Prinseps, and Thackerays, whose careers are so movingly depicted in Sir William Hunter's *The Thackerays in India*. William Makepeace Thackeray was drawing from life when he depicted Jos Sedley and Colonel Newcome. The latter is a compound character, drawn from his chivalrous cousin Sir Richard Shakespear, the pious but unlucky Richard Becher, and his still more luckless great-uncle and guardian Peter Moore, whose sudden downfall from the world of wealth and Parliament, and death as an exiled bankrupt, formed a convenient text for *Vanity Fair*—'the old, old tale of folly, fortune, glory, ruin'.

Victorian England was greatly impressed by the stories of pioneers like Herbert Edwardes, Nicholson, and the Lawrences, who devoted their lives to the task of restoring law and order in India after the century of anarchy which followed the break-up



of the Mughal empire. These men were inspired by sincere if narrow religious principles and a high sense of duty, and the absence of communications gave them a freedom of initiative seldom enjoyed by their successors. The dominant note in the Victorian writer on India is, in Kipling's phrase, the White Man's Burden.

From out the sunset poured an alien race,  
Who fitted stone to stone again, and Truth,  
Peace, Love and Justice came and dwelt therein.

This is the prevailing tone of novelists such as Flora Annie Steele, the remarkable lady who wrote under the name of Sydney C. Grier, and a host of smaller fry, most of whom will be happily forgotten with the passing of the age to which they belonged. Rudyard Kipling, of course, occupies a unique position. His early struggles as a journalist made him see the seamy side of official life, which he mercilessly satirized in *Plain Tales from the Hills*. But to him India is still the White Man's India, as depicted in *The Day's Work*, and Indians only form the background. Even in *Kim*, with its inimitable pictures of the Great Trunk Road, the teeming bazaars, and the undercurrent of gossip and intrigue, the hero is always the master spirit, coming to the fore by virtue of his white blood. In Kipling's most successful tales, *The Tomb of His Ancestors*, *William the Conqueror*, and *The City of Dreadful Night*, the theme is always the same, the Englishman spending himself in the service of the race he rules. There is, however, an unexpected vein of mysticism in Kipling, which comes out in stories like *They* and *The Brushwood Boy*. This and some of his poems, like the *Song of Kabir*, may be traced to his Indian contacts. Kipling is at his best when portraying rural life in India, a gift which he inherited from his father. His *Jungle Book* belongs to the same class of literature as Lockwood Kipling's *Beast and Man in India*, and 'Eha's' *Tribes on my Frontier* and *Behind the Bungalow*.

With the advent of the Reforms, a change has come over Anglo-Indian relations, which is reflected in contemporary literature. Edmund Candler's *Sri Ram Revolutionist*, and Dennis Kincaid's<sup>1</sup> *Their Ways Divide* are studies of the reaction upon the younger generation of the spirit of revolt against the dominance of an alien race. E. M. Forster's *Passage to India* draws a scathing picture of the absurdities of Indian station-life which would have been looked upon as little less than treason by an earlier generation, and is remarkable for its successful attempt to depict Indians and Indian society in the round, and not merely as a foil to the Euro-

<sup>1</sup> This writer's posthumous works, *British Social Life in India* and *The Final Image*, show how great has been the loss both India and England have sustained by his premature death.

pean characters in the book. Edward Thompson in *Night Dawns on Siva's Hill* and other novels, as well as in his plays, has devoted himself to depicting the clash between the two cultures as seen by a missionary in Bengal, where the conflict has assumed its most acute form. F. W. Bain stands apart from all these writers. A successor to Sir Edwin Arnold as Principal of the Deccan College at Poona, he has, like him, studied at the feet of Brahman pandits. At the end of the last century he startled the literary world with his story of an ancient manuscript bestowed upon him by an old Brahman, which he proceeded to translate. The manuscript, we may safely assume, was a literary ruse, and the *Digit of the Moon* and the other Hindu stories which followed are the product of the writer's own vivid imagination and his wide reading in Sanskrit literature, particularly in the *Katha Sarit Sagara* or Ocean of Stories of the Kashmiri writer Somadeva, and the Twenty-five Tales of a Vampire (*Vetala-pancharvinsatika*). Admirers of Bain's work will not easily forget the end of his tale of the two lovers, granted their prayer by the merciful god as they lie in one another's embrace:

'And he prayed to the all powerful and self-existent One, saying: O Maheshwara, let this heaven continue for ever, and let the chain of my existence be broken at this point! Or rather, let Time be destroyed for me, and let me remain, beyond its influence, for evermore in this present, this moment of union with my beloved! And that moon-created God heard him, and granted his wish. And he shot at that pair of lovers, as they slept in one another's arms in the moonlit creeper bower, a glance of his third eye, and reduced them to ashes. But he said: The chain of their existence cannot yet be broken, for they have not yet earned emancipation by penance and austerities. But they shall meet again, and be husband and wife, in another birth.'

Bain's poetry is as exquisite as his prose. The following is his translation of the *sloka* which adorns the title-page of *The Digit of the Moon*:

Like a New Moon's exquisite Incarnation,  
In the ebb and flow of a surging sea,  
Wave-breasted Beauty, the whole Creation,  
Wanes and waxes and rocks on Thee!  
For we rise and fall on thy bosom's billow,  
Whose heaving swell is our home divine,  
Our chalice at dawn, and our hot noon's pillow,  
Our evening's shrine.<sup>1</sup>

There remains one distinguished poetess who may be fairly claimed as combining the cultures of East and West. Sarojini Naidu's *Golden Threshold* appeared in 1905 and her more famous

<sup>1</sup> The passage is quoted with the kind permission of the publishers, Messrs. Methuen & Co.



*Bird of Time* seven years later. She was at once hailed by Sir Edmund Gosse as a new star in the literary firmament. Gosse advised the young poetess of the Deccan to abandon imitating English models and give her readers 'some revelation of the heart of India, and of such mysterious intimations as stirred the soul of the East long before the West began to realize that it had a soul'. She has a wonderful gift for employing Oriental metaphors:

A caste-mark on the azure brows of heaven,  
The golden moon burns, sacred, solemn bright.

And there are her verses addressed *To a Buddha Seated on a Lotus* :

With futile hands we seek to gain  
Our inaccessible desire,  
Divine summits to attain,  
With faith that sinks and feet that tire:  
But nought shall conquer or control  
The heavenward hunger of the soul.  
The end, illusive and afar,  
Still lures us with its beckoning flight,  
And all our mortal moments are  
A session of the Infinite.<sup>1</sup>

A movement which affected European thought very strongly in the later Victorian period was theosophy. Theosophy is a queer mixture of charlatanism and truth. Madame H. P. Blavatsky, a Russian adventuress of doubtful antecedents but undoubted mediumistic powers, joined hands with the American Colonel Olcott in the seventies in holding spiritualistic séances in various parts of America. Madame Blavatsky published a book entitled *Isis Unveiled*, which is an uncritical farrago of quotations from all sorts of works, ancient and modern, on magic and kindred subjects. In 1880 the pair went out to the East and there came into contact with Buddhism and Hinduism. From this they evolved the theory that the world is under the guidance of a hierarchy of Mahatmas or Masters, picturesquely described as the Great White Brotherhood, with their Lodge in Tibet. Of these Masters, Krishna, Buddha, and Jesus are incarnations. Madame Blavatsky's successor was Mrs. Annie Besant, who made her head-quarters at Adyar near Madras. Mrs. Besant had a striking personality and was a fervent upholder of Indian nationalism, and under her influence the movement had for a time a great vogue. Though quite uncritical in its methods, theosophy undoubtedly induced a large number of people both in Europe and America to read the *Bhagavad-gita* and other Hindu books, and to acquire some ideas about Karma, rebirth, and other Hindu philosophical and religious

<sup>1</sup> The lines are quoted from *The Golden Threshold* with the kind permission of the author and the publishers, Messrs. Heinemann.

doctrines. Since Mrs. Besant's death the influence of theosophy has waned. Her one-time protégé, a young Indian known as Krishnamurti, teaches a vague pragmatism which has little or no connexion with the supposed revelations of the Mahatmas.

One of the most remarkable figures in modern Hinduism was a Bengali ascetic, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who was born in 1836, and leaving home and parents, wandered about India seeking the truth from the mouths of various teachers. He shared the huts of scavengers, ate with Muslims and Christians, and spent much of his time in a state of ecstasy. He was a very remarkable man, and inspired with an intense love of humanity. Though he wrote nothing, he was a great talker, and many of his sayings were collected by his followers. One of these describes him as having 'a child-like tenderness, a profound visible humbleness, an unspeakable sweetness of expression and a smile I have seen on no other face I can remember'. He has, as stated above, been made the subject of a biography by Max Müller.

His chief disciple was Swami Vivekananda, who attended a Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893. The Swami's lofty and commanding personality and his striking eloquence won him a ready hearing in the United States, and he started the Ramakrishna Mission, the object of which was to wean its followers from the greed, sensuality, and materialism of the West by means of the ancient truths of Hinduism—the identity of the World Soul and the individual, the illusory nature of objects of the senses, and the theory of Karma, or the inevitable retribution following upon our deeds in former lives. Christianity teaches us to love one's neighbour as one's self. 'Your neighbour *is* yourself', is Swami Vivekananda's retort. The American head-quarters of the Ramakrishna Mission are in San Francisco, where there is a picturesque Hindu shrine. Besides a network of *maths* and schools all over India, there are centres of the Ramakrishna Order in Europe, South Africa, South America, and the United States. Two American ladies have given all their possessions for the building of a shrine at Belur near Calcutta, the Indian head-quarters of the Mission. Among Swami Vivekananda's most eminent followers was Margaret Noble (Sister Nivedita), who devoted her life to the poor and suffering in Calcutta. Her *Web of Indian Life* is a singularly beautiful book, which gives a highly idealized picture of Hindu religious and social customs.

Perhaps the two Hindu thinkers who have influenced modern European thought most strikingly are Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. The Tagore family have played a unique part in the spiritual and cultural renaissance which has been such a remarkable feature of modern India, and for many years Rabin-



dranath has been the acknowledged king of Bengal literature. His short devotional verses have been collected and translated into rhythmical English prose under the title *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings).

'There is no Karma, no transmigration, no inaction, no pessimism, no hatred of sense in this lofty verse; but there is the perception that nature is the revelation of God; there is everywhere the joy of meeting Him in sun and shower; there is the dignity and worth of toil, deliverance won by going down where God is, among the poorest and lowliest and lost, the duty of service, the core of religion found in righteousness, life won by dying to self, sin recognized as shame and thralldom, and death as God's messenger and man's friend.'

W. B. Yeats tells us how he carried *Gitanjali* about with him for days, reading it in railway trains or on the top of omnibuses and in restaurants, and often compelled to close it lest some stranger would see how much it moved him. Tagore's world view is expressed in *Sadhana* (Fulfilment), consisting of lectures delivered at Harvard University. The award of the Nobel Prize in 1913 was an appreciation of the immense influence he has exercised on contemporary thought. Tagore's views have found a gifted exponent in Professor Sir S. Radhakrishnan, who is now Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford. Sir S. Radhakrishnan has made a profound attempt to find a synthesis between modern metaphysics and the philosophy of the Upanishads.

In striking contrast to the majestic Bengali philosopher is the little Gujarati saint, with his kindly smile and his gentle, winning voice. Yet who can judge whether future ages will reckon M. K. Gandhi as the greater spiritual force of the two? The Mahatma has infused a new spirit into the national struggle for freedom by the application of the ancient Hindu doctrine of *ahimsa* or non-violence. Mr. Gandhi's philosophy of life is founded on Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, Tolstoi's *The Kingdom of God is within You*, the *Bhagavad-gita*, and the Sermon on the Mount, and he offers non-violent resistance as a practical alternative to the piling up of armaments which threatens to overwhelm civilization. Mr. Gandhi's aims are, however, not merely negative. We should endeavour, he thinks, not merely to resist evil, but in doing so to win over the hearts of our enemies. 'Make your enemy love you' is the core of his philosophy. For the rest, salvation, at any rate for India, lies in renouncing all that the West has taught, and the return to the life of the simple peasant. Political antagonisms have prevented England from forming a detached estimate of Mr. Gandhi's achievement, but on the Continent he has found a powerful exponent in Romain Rolland, whose *Prophets of the New*

<sup>1</sup> J. N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (1915), pp. 385-6.

*India* has had a remarkable effect in awaking the West to the inner significance of eastern thought in the modern world.

One of the directions in which the influence of India is being most increasingly felt is in Art. In the seventeenth century Oriental art had many admirers in Europe; Sir Thomas Roe was deeply impressed with the skill of the miniature painters of Jahangir's court. Professor Sarre<sup>1</sup> has made some interesting investigations on the influence of Mughal art on Rembrandt (1606-69). Rembrandt lived for a time at Amsterdam, and painted the portrait of Abraham Wilmerdonks, a Director of the Dutch East India Company and a great connoisseur of Indian art. Among Rembrandt's effects was 'a book of curious miniature drawings', doubtless Mughal miniatures, and a number of his pen-and-ink sketches in the Louvre and British Museum have been identified. One of these drawings in the British Museum is a replica of a portrait of Jahangir in the Ethnographic Museum, Berlin, and there are also pictures of an Indian Prince on horseback and of Timur seated on his throne. Rembrandt derived from Indian paintings of the period his love of chiaroscuro effects and the oriental atmosphere with which he invests his religious studies; and generally speaking, there is a close affinity between the technique of the Mughal portrait painters and the traditions of the early Dutch and Flemish schools.<sup>2</sup> Warren Hastings and his contemporaries made valuable collections of Indian art, which are now in the India Museum (South Kensington), the British Museum, and other places. Eighteenth-century painters went to India to obtain commissions for portraits from 'Nabobs', Indian and English, and brought back interesting pictures of the scenery and ancient buildings of India, which had a great vogue. The first European artist who visited India in a professional capacity was Tilly Kettle, who was in the country from 1769 to 1776, and set the fashion of painting in the western manner at the Court of Oudh. William Hodges, who came out a few years later, was patronized by Warren Hastings, and published a book of aquatints which started the vogue for similar works in England. John Zoffany, a naturalized German, was by far the most celebrated artist of the school. He was overwhelmed with commissions from the Nawab of Oudh, Warren Hastings, General Claud Martin, and others. He tells us that he 'expected to roll in gold dust' and 'had visions of limitless gold and lacs of rupees'. With rare catholicity, he painted a picture, the Last Supper, for the reredos of St. John's Church, Calcutta (in which he inserted one of his enemies as Judas Iscariot), and a portrait of Mahadji Sindhia, which hangs in the

<sup>1</sup> *Jahrbuch der Kön. Preussischen Sammlungen*, xxv (Berlin, 1904).

<sup>2</sup> E. B. Havell, *Indian Sculpture and Painting* (1908), p. 204.



family temple at Wanowrie near Poona and has the unique distinction of being the only English picture worshipped by Hindus. In Madras, William Devis accompanied Lord Cornwallis to the siege of Seringapatam, and painted the well-known picture of the capitulation of the sons of Tipu Sultan. John Smart, the miniaturist, introduced to India the art of painting on ivory, and obviously owed much to the study of the Mughal painters.

Thomas and William Daniell, uncle and nephew, toured India from 1786 to 1794, and their volume of *Oriental Scenery*, published by the Court of Directors in periodical parts, is a set of one hundred and four aquatints of exceptionally fine quality, which were responsible for creating an impression about the 'romantic East' which was widely reflected in contemporary literature. James Wales, the son-in-law of Sir Charles Malet, our Resident at the Court of the Peshwa of Poona, did a similar service for western India. Many other names, William Westall, William Havell, Robert Home, and others might be mentioned, but a special word must be given to George Chinnery, who made entrancing studies of low life in India, and afterwards migrated to China, where he taught Chinese pupils and had considerable influence on the indigenous art of the country. He died at Macao at an advanced age in 1852.<sup>1</sup>

A taste for oriental things such as *Chinoiserie*, Indian metal and lacquer work, cashmere shawls, and embroidered bedspreads and chintzes, became fashionable. At one time it appeared as though Indian architecture was destined to influence English style. In 1786 Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his thirteenth discourse, suggested that 'the barbaric splendours of Asiatic buildings' might furnish an architect, not with models to copy, but with hints of composition and general effect which would not otherwise have occurred. Thomas Daniell designed for Major John Osborne a temple 'after the chastest model of Hindoo architecture', and Humphry Repton planned for Sir Charles Cockerill at Sezincote in Gloucestershire a country house very successfully modelled on the tomb of Haidar Ali Khan at the Lal Bagh in Hyderabad. The most notorious effort in this style was, of course, the Brighton Pavilion. In the beginning of the nineteenth century the Prince Regent, stimulated no doubt by the success of Sezincote, erected the building known as the Dome on his estate at Brighton, and in 1805 he ordered Humphry Repton to enlarge it. Repton wrote: 'I could not hesitate in agreeing that neither the Grecian nor the Gothic style could be made to assimilate what had so much of the character of an Eastern building. If any known style of architecture were to be adopted, no alternative remains but to combine from the

<sup>1</sup> See the article on 'British Artists in India, 1760 to 1840', by Sir William Forster, C.I.E., in the *Walpole Society Magazine*, vol. xix.

architecture of Hindustan such forms as might be rendered applicable for the purpose.' The work was carried out by John Nash, who is thus responsible for the Brighton Pavilion of to-day. It was used as an Indian hospital in the Great War, and a memorial gateway in the Gujarati style of the sixteenth century was added in commemoration of this. A *Chhatra* designed by an Indian artist was also erected on the Downs.<sup>1</sup>

In India itself Ranjit Singh's generals in the Punjab and Masson in Afghanistan explored Buddhist stupas, and this led to the discovery of the Indo-Greek coins which gave the key to the ancient scripts of India to James Prinsep in 1837. In 1845 James Fergusson published his first monograph on the Rock-cut Temples of India, which was expanded thirty years later into his monumental *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*. In 1862 General (Sir) Alexander Cunningham was appointed Director of Archaeology, and his annual reports for the next twenty-three years did for northern India what, a little later, Dr. James Burgess did for the south.

But in the nineteenth century the interest of England in India was mainly commercial, and people were chiefly attracted by her industrial products. Even so great an authority as Sir George Birdwood denied that India had any fine art at all, though he paid tribute to the skill of Indian craftsmanship. Ruskin, lecturing at the South Kensington Museum in 1858, declared that Indian Art 'either forms its compositions out of meaningless fragments of colour and flowings of line; or if it represents any living creature, it represents that creature under some distorted or monstrous form. To all facts or forms of nature it wilfully and resolutely opposes itself; it will not draw a man but an eight-armed monster; it will not draw a flower but only a spiral or a zig-zag.' Greek sculpture was looked on as the be-all and the end-all of ideal art, and every other art was judged by this canon. 'In nine cases out of ten', said Cunningham, 'India and Indian matters fail to interest, because they are to most people new and unfamiliar. The rudiments have not been mastered when young, and when grown up, few men have the leisure or the inclination to set to work to learn the forms of a new world.' Many people have had their ideas distorted by an exclusive preoccupation with Greco-Roman art. When faced with something without its characteristics they think it is not art. One of the chief debts which Europe to-day owes to Havell and his successors is that they enlarged the mental horizon of the younger generation by pointing out that the East has a great artistic tradition of its own.

A new attitude towards Indian culture began to appear in the

<sup>1</sup> H. D. Roberts, *History of the Royal Pavilion* (1939).



twentieth century, due chiefly to the work of two pioneers, E. B. Havell and Ananda Coomaraswamy. The latter's *Essays in National Idealism* and his *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* were revolutionary works, and a powerful stimulus was provided by Lord Curzon. Since the retirement of Cunningham in 1885, interest in the priceless monuments of ancient India had languished, and less and less was being done to preserve them from decay and official vandalism. Addressing the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1900, Lord Curzon said: 'I hope to assert more definitely during my time the imperial responsibility of Government in respect of Indian antiquities, to inaugurate or persuade a more liberal attitude on the part of those with whom it rests to provide the means, and to be a faithful guardian of the priceless treasure-house of art and learning that has, for a few years at any rate, been committed to my charge.' Curzon was as good as his word. Two years later the Government of India brought into force the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, and appointed Sir John Marshall as Director-General of Archaeology. Sir John Marshall's restoration of Sanchi, his excavations at Taxila, and lastly, his wonderful discoveries at Mohenjo-Daro have opened up a new epoch in Indian art and history, while Sir Aurel Stein has explored the Indo-Chinese borderland with equally important results. French savants, of whom the most eminent is M. Foucher, have investigated the so-called Gandhara school of Indo-Greek sculpture on the North-West Frontier.

Now an increasing number of people are beginning to see in Indian art, as in the art of medieval Europe, the bas-reliefs of Chartres, the miniatures of the Book of Kells and the windows of Gothic cathedrals, a spirituality entirely lacking in the splendid but soulless creations of classical Greece. A recent critic has recorded his conversion from the artistic conventions on which he was brought up. 'During a residence of twenty-five years in the East, I slowly found myself changing front. . . . It is just the spiritual appeal in Eastern art to which something deep and universal responds, and which is lacking in all Greek art save the earliest.'<sup>1</sup> In a recent lecture to the Royal Society of Arts,<sup>2</sup> Sir William Rothenstein, himself one of the foremost of contemporary artists, drew attention to the supreme inventiveness of the Indian sculptor. No people, he declared, had been so profusely inventive as the Indian people. Their iconography was the richest and the most exuberant ever evolved from the human brain. They peopled their vast heaven with an incredible number of gods, for all of which

<sup>1</sup> R. le May, *Buddhist Art in Siam*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Sir W. Rothenstein, 'The Genius of Indian Sculpture', *Journal of Royal Society of Arts*, vol. lxxxvi, June 1938.

they invented forms, attributes, and attitudes by which they could be recognized. This teeming, creative fertility is in itself a supreme achievement, the more so since they showed, in the forms they conceived for their gods, an equally abundant plastic inventiveness. The lecturer spoke of the enthusiasm of Degas and Rodin for early Indian sculpture. Indian influence is clearly visible in the new directions in which western art has blossomed out under Epstein and the Post-Impressionists. In recent times Indian painting has found enthusiastic exponents in Lady Herringham (whose copies of the Ajanta frescoes have made these masterpieces available in the West), Mr. Laurence Binyon, Mr. Lionel Heath, and Mr. Percy Brown. Fine collections of Indian art are to be found in the Musée Guimet in Paris, the Ethnographical Museum at Leyden, and the India Museum and the British Museum in London.

The India Society, the Courtauld Institute, the Royal Asiatic Society, the East India Association, the Society of the Friends of Asiatic Art in Amsterdam, and L'Association des Amis de l'Orient in Paris are doing their best to foster a better acquaintance in the West with the many-sided culture of the East, and suggestions have been made for the establishment of a Museum of Asiatic Culture in the metropolis of the Empire, planned and endowed upon a scale worthy of the treasures it would be called upon to house.

As time goes on, the intellectual debt of Europe to India will be increasingly recognized, and a knowledge of her culture will be regarded as indispensable. 'If I were to ask myself,' said Max Müller, 'from what literature we here in Europe, who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of the Greeks and Romans, and one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more universal, in fact, more human, I should point to India.'



## CHAPTER XVI GENERAL SURVEY

### CONTACTS

THE first contacts of the western nations with the people of India were due to mere juxtaposition, which was limited in extent, for their possessions consisted only of scattered settlements along the coast and of trading posts in the interior. Their primary object was trade, of which the success depended on mutual confidence and goodwill. When the British acquired territorial sovereignty the relations between them and the Indian people were inevitably put on a different footing. It was no longer a case of juxtaposition but of domination, and the representatives of the ruling race were necessarily brought into closer contact with the governed. Their number was at first utterly inadequate for the task of government. Their paucity and their want of administrative experience and training led to a postponement of the assumption of full governmental powers. In 1758, over a year after the battle of Plassey, Clive declined the offer of the Diwani, i.e. the revenue or fiscal administration, of Bengal on the ground that the resources of the East India Company were unequal to it. Seven years later he wrote to the Directors of the Company that 'the power of supervising the provinces, though lodged in us, should not be exercised. Three times the number of civil servants would be insufficient for the purpose.' According to Verelst, the staff at this time was barely strong enough to conduct the current commercial business. The Nawab of Bengal accordingly retained control of the revenue and judicial administration. It was not till 1772 that the Directors affirmed their determination to 'stand forth as the Diwan' and to undertake the management of the revenues, and it was not till 1790 that Lord Cornwallis announced that it had been resolved to undertake the superintendence of the administration of criminal justice.

In 1792 Charles Grant, who had spent over twenty years of his life in India in the service of the East India Company, and who afterwards became Chairman of the Court of Directors, wrote a remarkable little book, entitled *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain*, in which he propounded the view that Great Britain should effect the regeneration of India by introducing knowledge of the Christian religion, of the English language, and of English literature, as well as by means of western mechanical science, including 'the skilful application of fire, of water, and of steam' for the improvement of agriculture. It was, he urged, incumbent on the British, and their strict duty to the

people under their rule, to undertake educational and missionary work and so implant their language, their opinions, and their religion. These views were too advanced for the times. Grant's friend and fellow-member of the 'Clapham sect', William Wilberforce, succeeded in getting the House of Commons to adopt a resolution asserting that such measures should be adopted as might gradually lead to the religious and moral improvement of the people of India and to their advancement in useful knowledge, but when he endeavoured to implement this resolution by the addition to the Charter Act of 1793 of a clause authorizing the admission to India of schoolmasters and persons approved by the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Bishop of London, his motion was defeated, one narrow-minded member remarking that the American colonies had been lost because of the folly of establishing schools and colleges, and the same folly should not be repeated in India.

It was at this time more or less a settled policy that India should be a closed land to British subjects having no official connexion. In 1766 British-born subjects were prohibited from holding land there, and in 1783 Parliament provided that all private persons going to, or living in, India, unless authorized to do so by a licence granted by the Directors of the East India Company, should be liable to imprisonment and fine, a penalty which was changed ten years later to deportation. The rule was not enforced against those who had already settled in the country, but they were required in 1795 to furnish securities in sums varying from £500 to £2,000. It was used effectively to prevent the ingress of new-comers, no private person being permitted to take a passage by a British vessel unless in possession of a licence. Private persons were suspect on various grounds, commercial and political. The Company would not tolerate the competition of private merchants with its trade. There was a sincere apprehension that if adventurers settled in the interior, where they would be under little control, they might exploit and oppress the people and lower British prestige. Missionaries were regarded as a political danger. It was feared that their attacks on Hinduism and Islam might disturb the public tranquillity and endanger the stability of British rule. A certain number of missionaries succeeded in evading the embargo. The Baptist missionaries Carey, Marshman, and Ward took passages in Danish vessels and settled at Serampore, where they were under the protection of the Danish flag; the first missionary of the London Missionary Society settled in the Dutch town of Chinsura. Others joined these pioneers, and the Marquess Wellesley allowed them to teach and preach in British territory, and also permitted the publication of translations of the Bible and other products of the Baptist press. On the other hand, eight missionaries



were deported in 1812-13, five of whom were American citizens, while the other three had come out by way of America.

The policy of exclusion was supported by many who had personal experience of India. Impressed by the culture and simple virtues of its people, they denied that Indians had any mental or moral inferiority which could justify the introduction of western civilization or the propagation of the Christian faith—an attitude which exposed them to the taunt of having been Brahmanized by long residence in India. Warren Hastings had been convinced that it was not the function of Great Britain to impose an alien civilization, much less to attempt to reform the people by means of Christianity. His chief concern was the peace and good order of society, which, in his opinion, the precepts of Hinduism were admirably fitted to promote. Interwoven as they were with religion, the most fanciful customs which ignorance or superstition might have introduced among them were, he said, perhaps preferable to any which might be substituted in their place. 'The least which can be expected from the most liberal and enlightened of all nations is to protect them from wrong and to leave their religious creed to the Being who has so long endured it and who will in his own time reform it.'<sup>1</sup> Similar views were expressed by others. Sir Thomas Munro dreaded the chance of a downright Englishman being made head of the Board of Control who would insist on making Anglo-Saxons of the Hindus, and he declared, in the evidence which he gave before the House of Commons Committee in 1813, that if civilization were ever to become an article of trade between the two countries, England would greatly benefit by the import cargo. In the subsequent debate on the Charter Act Charles Marsh, who had been a barrister in Madras, inveighed against missionary work on the ground that it would disturb or deform institutions which appeared to have been the means ordained by Providence for making the people of India virtuous and happy. Opinion in Great Britain was moreover divided on the question of missions. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland resolved in 1796 that 'to spread abroad among barbarians and heathen natives the knowledge of the Gospel seems to be highly preposterous in so far as it anticipates, nay, even reverses the order of Nature'. Ten years later the Mutiny of Vellore was held to demonstrate the political danger of Christian propaganda, though it was due to other causes.<sup>2</sup> A polemical controversy ensued, in

<sup>1</sup> M. Davies, *Warren Hastings* (1935), pp. 100, 102.

<sup>2</sup> 'The prime cause of the mutiny was a military order which prescribed turbans as part of the sepoy's uniform and directed that they should not have sectarian marks on their faces, or wear ear-rings, that their chins should be clean-shaved and—a characteristic military touch—that 'uniformity, as far as it is practicable, be observed in regard to the quantity and shape of the hair upon the upper lip'.

which Southey vindicated the missionaries and Sydney Smith declared that the evangelical party had taken possession of the Indian empire and that missionaries should not be allowed to cause bloodshed and confusion by insulting the religion, shocking the feelings, and irritating the passions of its people.

It has been laid to the charge of Parliament that in 1793 it locked the door of India against the entrance of both religious and secular knowledge and gave the key of it to the Court of Directors, who strenuously resisted every effort to unlock it.<sup>1</sup> It was taken out of their hands in 1813, when the British definitely assumed the position of an educating and civilizing race as well as of a ruling race. The House of Commons first adopted a resolution affirming that in order to promote the introduction of useful knowledge and the religious and moral improvement of India, facilities should be afforded by law to persons who wished to go and settle there. This resolution was not merely the infructuous expression of a pious sentiment like that of 1793, as effect was given to it by the Charter Act. The ingress of missionaries was facilitated by a clause empowering the Board of Control, over which a Cabinet Minister presided, to give licences to persons to whom they had been refused by the Court of Directors. The commercial monopoly of the East India Company was brought to an end, and the trade of India thrown open to private enterprise. The principle that the education of the people of India was a duty of the Company was established by the provision of a small grant, which was to be used for the introduction and promotion of the sciences, as well as for the revival and improvement of literature. Actually there was no revolutionary change. For some years the educational grant was not expended; when use was made of it, it was devoted to the promotion of oriental learning and translations of scientific works.

Licences were grudgingly and sparingly granted. In fourteen years the number of persons admitted under the licence system aggregated only 1,324. When granted, they were often subject to conditions. A missionary, for example, who was sent out by the London Missionary Society in 1819, had to find securities to the amount of £500 for his good behaviour and to undertake not to utter a word which would weaken the authority of government. Ladies who got licences to take out maidservants had to give security to send them back at the end of two years. Europeans were still not permitted to acquire land and settle in the interior, and though a certain number did so, they were legally liable to deportation. The licence system was abolished by the Charter Act

<sup>1</sup> J. C. Marshman, *The Story of Carey, Marshman, and Ward* (1864), p. 214.



of 1833, which permitted free ingress and gave full rights of settlement in the interior;<sup>1</sup> but there was no great influx of non-officials. In that year there were 36,422 men of British birth in the army, and 1,055 in the covenanted civil service, but only 2,687 private persons, including 472 indigo planters. Twenty years later the number of those who had no connexion with the civil administration or with the army was still only 10,006, and those who were engaged in agriculture or manufactures in rural areas numbered no more than 317.

There were therefore comparatively few opportunities for personal contact with Europeans except in the great cities, the head-quarters of districts, i.e. the local centres of administration, and the military cantonments. The last were more numerous and far more widely distributed over the country than at present; there were over 200 prior to the Mutiny of 1857. In rural areas away from the district head-quarters there were only a few scattered Europeans such as indigo planters, missionaries, private traders, and the Commercial Residents of the East India Company. The last were members of the civil service just as much as those who were engaged in judicial and administrative work, but their work was commercial and industrial. They often lived in remote places, where no European has resided since 1835, when the Company gave up its mercantile dealings and withdrew the commercial residents. Their work is now forgotten, but it was of some importance in developing Indian industries, such as the manufacture of silk, sugar, and indigo, and each Residency was a centre from which European influences radiated. Not only was the European community numerically small, but it was somewhat peculiar in composition. It consisted almost entirely of working members. There was practically no leisured class, though many of the civil servants were scholarly men who were attracted by the culture of India and devoted themselves to its study in their spare time. There were also comparatively few European women, and, owing mainly to marriages of soldiers with women of the country, a small community of mixed blood sprang up which was formerly known as Eurasian and since 1911 has borne the official designation of Anglo-Indian.

The most important and widely diffused of the influences which were now brought to bear on British India were due to the system of government and law, embodying principles rooted in European

<sup>1</sup> The attitude of suspicion and distrust of non-officials was still apparent in a clause which affirmed that it was necessary to guard against any mischief or dangers that might arise from the removal of restrictions on the intercourse of Europeans, and accordingly required the Government of India to provide by law or regulations for the protection of the people from insult and outrage in their persons, religions, or opinions.

and not Indian consciousness, which affected all areas and all classes. These are considered in a later section, and here it is proposed to deal with other contacts. One of the earliest symptoms of westernization was the adoption of European military organization, accoutrements, and arms. There was imitativeness even in petty details; for instance, not only did the Gwalior troops in 1844 wear uniforms like those of the English but some of their drums had the words Waterloo and 'Pinsular' (a corruption of Peninsular) painted on them.<sup>1</sup> There was also a certain amount of imitation of externals in civil life. In places like Calcutta, for instance, the well-to-do built houses adorned with Corinthian pillars, filled their rooms with English furniture, and drove about in English carriages. European dress was not adopted except in a few cases of children, whose round hats, jackets, and trousers made a bizarre contrast with the brocade caftans and diamond-studded turbans worn by their companions.

Western influences of this kind extended beyond the limits of British territory and were strongly in evidence at Lucknow, where the Nawabs, afterwards the Kings, of Oudh maintained a splendid court. Lucknow was the creation of Asaph-ud-Daula, who converted a village into a city, in which Indo-Gothic architecture was prominent, though there was the usual medley of mean streets and a maze of filthy lanes and alleys so narrow that there was scarcely room for an elephant to pass. Asaph-ud-Daula was a patron of the painter Zoffany and an industrious collector of European products, such as clocks and watches (for one of which he paid £10,000), fire-arms and scientific instruments, furniture and glass; over a thousand glass lustres were suspended from the ceilings of a building which served as a kind of lumber-room for his objects of vertu. His successor, who had spent his early years in Calcutta, kept open table for members of the European colony, and had three dinners served simultaneously, that at the centre, where he himself sat, being cooked by an Indian cook, and those at the two ends by an English and a French cook. When Bishop Heber visited Lucknow in 1824, it appeared to him like one of the smaller European capitals such as Dresden; one fine street was wider than the High Street at Oxford and, in his estimation, had a distant resemblance to it in the colour of its buildings and the general form and Gothic style of most of them. The King himself had the contents of English books read out to him in Hindustani by his aides-de-camp, was keenly interested in mechanics and science, had a steam-boat on the river, and discussed with the Bishop steam-engines and a new way of propelling ships by a spiral wheel at the bottom of the vessel which an English engineer

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Bostock, *Letters from India and the Crimea* (1896), p. 116.



in his service had invented. A quaint case of imitativeness was an abortive effort by Ranjit Singh to have a steamer built. He ordered Ventura, an Italian general in his army, to build one, and the latter, non-plussed, turned to Colonel Gardner for help. All Gardner could do was to build a two-decked barge with paddle-wheels worked by hand. It could not go more than ten yards or so against the rapid stream of the Ravi, but Ranjit Singh was quite satisfied, for it did move, however slowly, without sails or oars. In Gardner's ironical words, 'he had equalled the achievements of the West in science, and that was all he desired'.<sup>1</sup>

In 1813 when private commercial enterprise and missionary evangelization, though still restricted, were no longer banned, and inward assimilation became noticeable, western learning, opening out a new world of knowledge and experience, seems to have exercised a cultural fascination quite independently of any monetary advantage which might be derived from it. Persian, and not English, was still the language of judicial and other official proceedings, and a knowledge of English was not yet a qualification for office; in 1836 Sadar Diwani Adalat, the highest court of civil judicature in Bengal, reported that no particular acquirements were looked for in an Indian judge beyond general good character, respectability of family, and a competent knowledge of the Persian and Bengali languages. Indian leaders of thought complained,<sup>2</sup> as did Sir Thomas Munro, that the incentives to higher education had been removed by Indians being no longer appointed to high office, but actually this was no bar to the spread of English education. English schools were started by missionaries, by Europeans and Indians working in co-operation, and by the independent efforts of Indians. Not only did a considerable proportion of the upper classes learn the English language, read English books and newspapers, and court English society, but those belonging to a lower social stratum also showed a keen desire to learn and speak English. The Muslims, who later protested against, and held aloof from, English education when it was sponsored by government, were not averse from it so long as it was promoted by voluntary agencies and had no official connexion. They evinced 'a strong and growing disposition to learn the English language and to adopt, by degrees, very many of the English customs and

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Alexander Gardner*, edited by Major H. Pearse (1897), pp. 202-3.

<sup>2</sup> In a memorial presented to the King in Council in 1823 by Raja Ram Mohan Ray and others it was pointed out that, under the Mughals, Hindus and Muslims alike had been eligible for the highest offices of State, the command of armies, and the government of provinces, and the aim of education had been qualifications for such posts, 'whereas under the present system so trifling are the rewards held out to native talent that hardly any stimulus to intellectual improvement remains'. J. K. Majumdar, *Indian Speeches and Documents on British Rule, 1821-1928* (1937), pp. 25-7.

fashions'.<sup>1</sup> The opposition to the propaganda of missionaries, which was shown when they made direct attacks on Hinduism and Islam by oral preaching and the circulation of books and tracts, did not extend to their educational activities. There seems to have been little objection to children going to mission schools or to their using the Bible as a class-book. Nor was there the same objection to female education as there had been in 1813, when Brahman pandits protested that if women were educated, they would no longer worship men, as was their bounden duty. Ten years later there were over a score of mission girls' schools, with some 500 pupils, in Calcutta and its neighbourhood, which Brahman *gurus*<sup>2</sup> visited and inspected. Raja Radha Krishna Deb, the leader of the orthodox party in Bengal and the head of the movement against the abolition of suttee, publicly declared that, if the girls practised the Sermon on the Mount as well as they repeated it, he would choose all his wives' and daughters' handmaids from an English school.

In 1824 Bishop Heber noticed that there was a change of a most extensive and remarkable nature permeating the Indian mind.<sup>3</sup> The working of the new leaven was seen in movements in which western ideas were applied to the problems of social and religious life, such as the agitation against suttee, in which progressive Hindus made common cause with the missionaries, and in the reforming movement which led to the formation of the Brahmo Samaj. There was a revulsion against the restrictions of the caste system and the domination of sacerdotal authority as represented by the Brahmans. Rationalism instead of authority was accepted as a guiding principle by a certain number of more advanced thinkers who, forsaking the faith and practices of their forefathers, became more or less Europeanized and formed a small society of their own. These, however, were a small minority. The majority of the intellectual *élite* continued to live on the thoughts and traditions inherited from previous generations. Many adopted some of the outward appurtenances of western civilization, mixed in English society, studied European philosophy and science, and gave their money and personal services for the promotion of English education, but refused to subscribe to the subversive doctrines of the West, and clung to their religion and their caste.

The British may be said to have imposed a western system of law and government, modified however by the policy of making continuity and adaptation a twofold principle of progressive reform. Except to this extent, and except for missionary propaganda,

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Bishop Heber dated 13 July 1824, *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India* (1849), vol. ii, pp. 207-8.

<sup>2</sup> Family priests and spiritual preceptors.

<sup>3</sup> Letter of 2 February 1824, *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India* (1849), vol. ii, p. 203.



there was no conscious and deliberate attempt to introduce western principles and practices until 1835, when government took two measures, of which one is well known and the other is comparatively little known. The former was the official adoption of English education in accordance with the declaration that the great object of the British government ought to be the promotion of English literature and science among the people of India. The latter was the foundation of a Medical College at Calcutta in order to provide a staff of doctors trained in western surgery and medicine, who would replace empirical practitioners ignorant of anatomy and chemistry. The decision in favour of English met a demand for it on the part of Indians,<sup>1</sup> but the introduction of western surgery, involving the dissection of dead bodies, was abhorrent to Hindu sentiment; according to a contemporary account, of all the measures for the promotion of education in India, this alone was adopted in anticipation of an effective demand.<sup>2</sup>

So far from an alien culture being thrust on an unwilling people, it was welcomed and there was a demand for more contacts. Indians advocated European colonization of their country as an aid to its regeneration and urged that European culture and science should be imported with more material products, such as machinery. Some voiced the view that the principles of English law should be engrafted more fully on Indian institutions. Interest was taken in European as well as Indian questions. An Indian press had been started which gave both European and Indian news. Political issues were canvassed with a leaning to Whiggism, the precursor of the Gladstonian Liberalism which was in vogue half a century later; Raja Ram Mohan Ray declared in 1832 that if the Reform Bill was defeated, he would renounce his connexion with Great Britain. The influence of European ideas was seen in the interest taken in such questions as trial by jury<sup>3</sup> and the liberty of the Press. Opinion expressed itself strongly on the subject of the removal of the restrictions which impeded the free residence of British-born subjects. The good relations between the Indian and European communities, and the services rendered by the latter in promoting educational and other good causes, were referred to in glowing terms. In 1829 one enthusiastic correspondent of an Indian newspaper roundly declared that anyone who opposed the unrestricted residence of Europeans in India was an enemy of its people and of

<sup>1</sup> The statistics of the sale of books in 1834 and 1835 are an index of the trend of popular taste. Nearly 32,000 English books were sold, but under 13,000 books written in Hindustani, Hindi, and Bengali, and only 1,500 written in Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit.

<sup>2</sup> C. E. Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India* (1838), p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> By an Act passed in 1832 Indians in Calcutta became entitled, equally with Europeans, to be appointed Justices of the Peace and to serve on grand and petty juries.

the rising and future generations. An editorial published in another paper pointed out that the increased prosperity of the country and 'the dawn of a new era' were largely due to the development of its trade and the imports of European products, skill, and energy which had taken place since 1813. What then might not be expected from a fuller influx of Europeans and their settlement in the country free from the odious threat of deportation? Petitions were sent to Parliament representing that restrictions on the free resort of British-born subjects to India, on their residence there, and on the acquisition of land by them, were obstacles to the development of commerce, agriculture, and manufactures. Raja Ram Mohan Ray, in supporting a resolution that Parliament should provide for the unrestricted application of British skill, capital, and industry to the commercial and agricultural resources of India, expressed his conviction that the greater the intercourse with Europeans, the greater would be its literary, social, and political advance; and he went out of his way to defend the indigo planters against the charges of exploitation and oppression made against them, asserting that, though there might be exceptions, they had as a class done more good to the generality of the people than any other class of European, whether official or non-official.<sup>1</sup>

The early years of the second half of the nineteenth century were a formative period of even greater importance, in which the tide of westernization set strongly on the shores of India. A mere recital of dates is sufficient to show the rapid succession of changes. In 1853 the first railway began running; in 1854 the first telegraph line was opened and the modern postal system was installed. In 1857 the first universities were established and the Mutiny broke out. Next year the government of India was transferred from the East India Company to the Crown. In 1861 the seeds of popular representation were sown by the institution of Legislative Councils. There was an accumulation of factors making for further westernization. Government began to be organized to a greater extent on European models and to employ more and more western methods of administration. The political connexion with England brought about closer economic contacts with the West. Mechanical transport was introduced and large-scale industries employing western technical processes were set up under European direction and control. There was a greater influx of Europeans into the country, and commercial and industrial enterprise developed, under European leadership and organization, with the capital which Great Britain poured into it. Indian capital was also unlocked and fructified instead of lying idle. Before the Mutiny there was a

<sup>1</sup> See J. K. Mazumdar, *Indian Speeches and Documents on British Rule, 1821-1928* (1937), pp. 36-45.



feeling of insecurity, and merchants, anticipating or nervous of an outbreak, had hoarded their money. It was now realized that the British had reserves of strength which had not been suspected, and their rule was accepted as a settled fact. Indian capitalists opened their coffers and joined Europeans in financing industrial schemes and mercantile undertakings.

'Capital', wrote Sir Herbert Edwardes in 1866, 'of which the timidity is proverbial, has unlocked its hoards in India since 1857 and is trading no longer village with village, but with all the countries of the world. And what is to be noted is the novel association of natives and Europeans in large schemes of commerce, which forms a new bond of union.'<sup>1</sup>

An extraordinary stimulus was given to trade by the American Civil War, which produced what was described at the time as a perfect revulsion of enterprise. There was a mania of speculation and company promotion in Bombay. The name of the companies was legion; banks and financial associations, shipping and steamer companies, companies for land reclamation, for brick and tile manufacture, for hotels and livery stables, for cotton pressing, cotton cleaning, and cotton spinning were started in quick succession. If this peculiar product of modern commercialism can be taken as a criterion, Bombay may be said to have passed at a bound to an advanced stage of westernization. It was not the only part of India affected. As far away as Amritsar the telegrams about prices were a daily excitement; quotations were repeated in the villages, and Punjabi peasants asked for the latest news of America from every European they met. This is only one instance of commercial contacts leading to an increasing economic penetration of India by the West.

The educational policy of the government led to further cultural penetration. Its lines were laid down by Sir Charles Wood's dispatch of 1854, which emphatically and unequivocally declared that the education which it was desired to extend in India was that which had for its object the diffusion of the improved arts, sciences, philosophy, and literature of Europe, in short, of European knowledge. A new development was the institution of universities, modelled on the University of London, as it then was. They were intended to provide an advanced education for the upper classes, just as the English universities did at that time; but, as the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, Sir Henry Maine, pointed out in 1866, those who thought to create an aristocratic institution succeeded in creating a popular institution. He himself was astounded by what he called the multitude of students and by their eagerness to acquire knowledge. 'I do not think', he said,

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Letters of Major-General Sir Herbert B. Edwardes* (1886), vol. ii, p. 391.

'anything of the kind has been seen by any European university since the Middle Ages.'<sup>1</sup> Actually the number of students was only a fraction of what it was later. In twenty years (1864-83) the total number of those who passed the examinations for the degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in all the universities throughout India was under 5,000, or about half the number who now pass those examinations in a single year. In 1883 there were only four universities, Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, and the Punjab. Fifty years later seventeen were in existence with an aggregate of over 100,000 students. In addition to home students, a certain number pursued their studies in Europe and America in order to obtain admission into the Indian Civil Service or to qualify for the legal, medical, and engineering professions. The number of those who went overseas, at first minute owing to the fear of outcasting, grew as the prejudice against journeys to and residence in western countries became weaker, and in course of time a new class of Europeanized Indians came into existence, which though never large,<sup>2</sup> was of importance because of the ideas which it brought back to India. It is known by the sobriquet of the 'Europe-returned', and the clash between its ideas and those of conservative India is a subject of literary and dramatic presentation.

Contacts with the outside world were enormously increased with the Great War of 1914-18, when 943,000 men (combatants 552,000 and non-combatants 391,000) went overseas, and were widely scattered under alien skies. Emigration, though limited by the restrictions imposed by an Emigration Act passed in 1922, is by no means negligible. One million emigrated to other countries, chiefly Malaya and Ceylon, in the decade 1921-31, at the end of which it was estimated that 2½ million Indians were living in countries overseas. Some of the migrants settle down in their new homes, but others are only temporary migrants, and there is a steady return flow. No Madras emigrant, it is said, severs his ties of community with the home country, and on his return he seeks to take a normal place within it.<sup>3</sup> During their absence emigrants remit money home. On their return they bring back their accumulated savings and a stock of new ideas. One of the

<sup>1</sup> H. S. Maine, *Village Communities in the East and West* (1876), pp. 277, 279.

<sup>2</sup> There were 7,000 Indians in England and Wales when the census of 1931 was taken. It is estimated that there were 1,850 Indian students in the British Isles in 1936-7, when they were the largest national group among university students from the British Empire overseas. According to a recent report of the Secretary to the High Commissioner for India (Education Department), there is a widespread belief that the market value of a student will be enhanced if he supplements his home education with a degree taken at a university abroad, though experience has shown that many of them on their return to India fail to find employment or openings commensurate with their qualifications.

<sup>3</sup> *Census of India Report for 1931*, vol. i, part i, p. 72.



causes assigned for the remarkable educational progress of the Punjab after the Great War<sup>1</sup> was the return of sepoys who, as the head of the Education Department said, had seen life and the world and were determined that their sons should receive the benefits of education. In this province returned emigrants appear to gain rather than lose in popular esteem because of their sojourn abroad, the general verdict on them being that they are all the better morally as well as materially. Home-keeping youths have ever homely wits, and the travelled Punjabi is more intelligent and better educated than his home-staying brother, and he understands, and inculcates, the virtues of truth-telling, hygiene, and thrift.<sup>2</sup>

Language and the literature in which thought finds expression lie at the root of mental culture, and knowledge of the English language and the study of English literature have done more to spread western culture than personal contacts with Europeans in general and the British in particular. Climatic conditions preclude colonization, and out of her millions Great Britain has never sent to India more than suffice to garrison the country and to provide the personnel for key positions in civil life, as for instance the staff needed for the control and management of large-scale commercial and industrial undertakings, for posts requiring special educational and technical qualifications, and for the higher branches of the civil administration. The aggregate number of persons born in Europe and America who were enumerated in India at the census of 1931 was 118,000 and 4,500 respectively, the British Isles accounting for 100,000 and the British army for 70,000, so that there were only 30,000 of British birth in civil life of all kinds. The European community is thus a small one, and it is peculiar in character and distribution. It is preponderatingly male; there are two men to every woman; the men are almost entirely active workers, and there is scarcely any leisured class. Its members are with few exceptions temporary sojourners, only a few making their homes in India and rarely before retirement from active work; Burke said in one of his speeches that there was one sight never seen in India, and that was the grey head of an Englishman; the latter is certainly uncommon. It is peculiarly localized, being almost confined to the chief cities, local centres of administration, industrial areas, military stations, and tea and coffee plantations. Outside them, Europeans are few and far between, and, except for a touring official, the majority of the rural population scarcely meet one from one year's end to another. There are three main classes.

<sup>1</sup> The number of pupils in schools rose from 557,000 in 1920-1 to 1,198,000 in 1926-7.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. M. L. Darling, *Rusticus Loquitur* (1930), pp. 178, 181, 362-3.

First, the British troops, mostly stationed on or near the north-west frontier, which have few opportunities for contacts with the people outside cantonments. Never large, the strength of the British army has been reduced and was a little under 47,000 in 1939. The second consists of the official class, which is much smaller. Throughout the whole period of British rule the administrative services have been manned almost entirely by Indians with a mere handful of Europeans, who have, however, exercised an influence out of all proportion to their numbers as they held the higher posts of control. In 1930, out of the hundreds of thousands serving in different branches of the administration, the number of Europeans was only about 12,000, of whom 3,500 were in superior grades. It has since decreased owing to the policy of Indianization.<sup>1</sup> They are scattered throughout the country in the Indian Civil Service, the police, educational, medical, engineering, and railway services, &c., and it is scarcely necessary to point out that it is impossible for such a small staff to get into personal touch with any but a small proportion of a population of 338 millions. The third class is the non-official community, which is, for the most part, concentrated in the main centres of manufacture and trade and in a few special areas, such as the tea estates in Assam, Darjeeling, and the Duars, and the tea and coffee plantations in the Nilgiris, but also includes a certain number of missionaries who penetrate to remote tracts.

As for social contacts, there has been a small amount of inter-marriage resulting in the creation of the Eurasian or Anglo-Indian community, the members of which have alined themselves with their European and not their Indian parents. There has been no fusion of races. Unlike other races who settled in India and gradually became Indianized,<sup>2</sup> the British have been temporary migrants, with 'no continuing city' in India. A small community in the midst of a vast alien population, they naturally strove to conserve their own manner of life and to uphold their own standards of civilization, with the result that they had their own social milieu and had little intimacy with their Indian neighbours. The latter not unnaturally resented the exclusiveness of the ruling race, which denied to them membership of its society, and they laid to its charge, often with, and often without, justification, pride of colour and prejudice of race.

<sup>1</sup> On 1 January 1938 the aggregate of European officers in the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Police in the provinces of Madras, Bombay, Bengal, United Provinces, Central Provinces, Punjab, Bihar, Orissa, Assam, and Sind was 590 and 416 respectively.

<sup>2</sup> Bernier noticed that the third and fourth generations of the Mughals had the brown complexion and languid manner of the country of their nativity. *Travels in Mogul Empire* (1891), p. 209.



There has always been association of the two communities in the civil administration and in business and co-operation in philanthropic and other good causes. There have always been Europeans filled with a consuming zeal for the moral, social, and economic uplift of India. But otherwise contacts have been neither many nor close. There is no natural tie between Great Britain and India, no community of blood or religion, no flux and reflux of population. Divided by race, blood, and religion, the races have been kept apart by differences in their ways of life, personal habits, psychological differences, incompatibility of tastes, divergences of outlook, and, not least, the temperamental exclusiveness and reserve of the English—traits which Emerson epitomized in the saying that each of these islanders is himself an island. These national traits are apt to display themselves in an indifference, having no root in racial antagonism, which cultured Indians are too sensitive to ignore, and too polite to expostulate against, but which causes a feeling of irritation, or exasperation, or rankling resentment according to their temperament. They appreciate the genial good-humoured manner shown by some Europeans, but complain that the English generally are not forthcoming, are mostly content with a chill courtesy, and seem to have no desire to 'get into their skins'.<sup>1</sup>

A further handicap to the English has been their linguistic weakness. The acquisition of foreign languages has notoriously never been their *forte*, and comparatively few have been able to gain a really deep knowledge of Indian tongues. There is a common belief that an earlier generation had a fuller and more thorough knowledge, but this is open to question. The remarks on the subject in Sir William Sleeman's *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official* (1844) are emphatic as to their deficiencies (which he himself admittedly shared) in talking upon subjects beyond everyday occurrences, and he has a good deal to say about their barbarous jargon. 'We must', he concluded, 'learn their language better, or we must teach them our own, before we can venture to introduce among them those free institutions which would oblige us to meet them on equal terms at the bar, on the bench, or in the senate.' The latter, and not the former, course has been taken. The barrier to mutual understanding has to some extent been broken down by the familiarity of Indians with the English tongue, but the fact remains that all too few Englishmen are qualified by

<sup>1</sup> This is a favourite cliché of the intelligentsia. It may perhaps be traced to General Gordon's remark: 'To govern men there is but one way, and it is an eternal truth. Get into their skins. Try to realize their feelings.' Lecky says in *The Political Value of History*: 'The power of realizing and understanding types of character very different from our own is not, I think, an English character.'

linguistic knowledge to study Indian literature and so gain a real insight into Indian culture.

In addition to this, there is the wide difference of social customs and all that is implied by the term social conventions. The reactions of each race to the other have been coloured by their habits and traditions. The attitude of the orthodox Hindu to Europeans is like that of Shylock to Christians: he will buy with them, sell with them, talk with them, walk with them, but he will not eat with them, drink with them, nor pray with them. Caste is incompatible with the British idea of dining together as a mark of friendship and makes conviviality impossible. The purdah system also stands in the way of social contacts. Englishmen are necessarily precluded from meeting purdah ladies, and many discountenance social relations between the women of their household and Indian gentlemen on the ground that there is no reciprocity. The objections to dining together are now disappearing in some sections of Indian society, and purdah is losing its hold. But even those who have given it up show a disinclination to admit Europeans to their family life and mostly meet them in hotels or restaurants, or at entertainments of various kinds, and not at home. For this and other reasons, comparatively few members of the two communities are on terms of close intimacy or friendship, the bonds of which are little likely to be forged in the office or counting house.

Personal intercourse has thus been limited to a narrow field. This was especially the case after the Mutiny, which left an aftermath of bitterness. The two communities were estranged and out of sympathy, the British having memories of treachery and massacre, the Indians memories of fierce retribution and of reprisals in which the innocent suffered with the guilty, and there was scarcely anything like a society in which they mixed on equal terms. The feelings of mutual distrust and rancour slowly died away, and there was a gradual *rapprochement*. There is now more social intercourse owing to a variety of causes, such as the growth of mutual esteem, the common bonds of work and sport—association on the bench and at the bar, in official work, in private business, in games, in freemasonry—a fuller appreciation on the one side of the capacity, intellectual gifts and courteous manners of cultured Indians and on the other a better understanding of British idiosyncrasies. The intellectuals of both races have many interests in common, as have also the commercial communities, Indian and European. The Indian *jeunesse dorée*, interested in such things as motor-cars, bridge, polo and other forms of sport, and having much the same intellectual pabulum—mostly modern fiction—gets on easily enough with its European counterpart. Social contacts are still, however, limited in number and extent. Few Indians enjoy



them outside a comparatively small society, more or less Europeanized, living chiefly in urban centres and consisting mainly of commercial magnates, captains of industry, and members of the civil services and of the learned professions. This society is now large enough to be more or less self-sufficing and independent of European society, which is a diminishing asset owing to the Indianization of the services and the replacement of European by Indian agency in other walks of life.

In the great majority of cases the impact of western influences has been due to impersonal factors, particularly the systems of government and law, the importation of the technical developments and material products of European civilization, and the invisible import of ideas. The effects of the systems of government and law will be mentioned later. As for the effects of commerce, it has been said by John Stuart Mill that its economic advantages are surpassed by the value of the intellectual and moral results produced by placing human beings in contact with persons dissimilar to themselves and with modes of thought and action unlike those with which they are familiar; but in India such an influence is minimized by the distance between it and the western world and by the paucity of the European commercial community. The intellectual influence has also been to a great extent impersonal or indirect. In most cases knowledge of the West, of its past history and contemporary movements, cultural, political, and economic, is obtained not first-hand but by secondary channels, such as collegiate and scholastic instruction, given only in rare cases by Europeans, or is derived from the impressions conveyed by contemporary publications, newspapers, periodicals, and books. Most books are inaccessible to the great majority of the population owing to their illiteracy, but the influence of newspapers and periodicals is widespread. There are nearly four thousand published in the different languages of India, and their circulation is not to be measured by the number of subscribers and purchasers, since they are read out to the illiterate by their literate friends and neighbours.

The Press has been instrumental in making India increasingly world-conscious. Persons whose interests used to be only local or personal now study international affairs, and it has been noticed that the outbreak of war in 1939 aroused far wider and more general interest than it did in 1914. The main, the absorbing interest of the Indian Press, however, is, and has long been, internal politics. It has been an organ of political propaganda, and though its voice has often been that of the demagogue, to it is chiefly due the political education of the people and the diffusion of nationalism. In the first half of the nineteenth century it played

a different, and, some might think, a nobler part. It was an organ of social and religious reform, and it set out to be a general educator, communicating, as one paper said, sound and valuable knowledge to the masses. It was then conducted not by trained journalists, dependent on it for a living, but to a large extent by men of letters and leaders of progressive thought, though reactionaries were not wanting who opposed their efforts. Its character was both informative and reformative. To cite one instance, the *Patwabodhini Patrika*, which was started in 1843 by the head of the Brahmo Samaj, Debendranath Tagore, with a literary genius, Askhay Kumar Dutt, as its editor, published religious and moral essays, scientific articles, accounts of different nations, and stories of the animate and inanimate creation. It was, according to Mr. R. C. Dutt, a vehicle for all that could enlighten the expanding intellect of Bengal, it created a thirst for knowledge, and it spread the spirit of progress and reform.<sup>1</sup>

As for the influence exerted by contemporary publications of the West it has been pointed out by Dr. J. C. Ghosh in his chapter on Bengali literature and drama that those which appeal to popular taste are not altogether representative of the best which the West can offer. It is often the second-rate which is admired and believed to be a true reflection of western life and thought. In literature lesser luminaries, shedding a dim and feeble light, are believed to be bright stars; the works of ephemeral writers have a vogue beyond their merits. In art specimens of a meretricious European style appeal to popular taste and are accepted as typical of the highest forms of western art. 'There seems to be a mutual disability in this respect. As an Indian observer remarked, 'the trouble is that English people admire in our work what we do not care for and that we appreciate in theirs what they do not admire'. Hence we find such anomalies as a brass-worker producing articles of Indian design for Europeans and articles of European design for the Indian public.

English education is for the most part an empirical study of the English language, which is learnt with the practical object of obtaining posts in government service or employment in the professions. But there is also a higher study of its literature, which has had a far-reaching influence on the literature of different Indian languages. Except in South India, where a secular literature was developed together with a religious literature, this was formerly exalted above the level of contemporary life by the ultra-natural sublimity of its subjects, which were mostly devotional, and of its characters, which were taken from the Hindu pantheon or the legendary world. There were other themes, as in chronicles

<sup>1</sup> *Literature of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1895), p. 164.



and war-ballads, but they were conspicuous for their paucity. Literary work was almost entirely poetical largely no doubt because poetry lent itself to oral transmission and to recitation in the absence of a printing-press. There were a few prose works like commentaries, but some even of them were metrical compositions. It seemed impossible, wrote Abbé Dubois, for the Hindus to write except in verse. 'They have not a single ancient book', he observed, 'that is written in prose, not even the books on medicine, grammar, and the like matter-of-fact themes. All Hindu books not in verse are modern.' In addition to this, literature was marked by a certain conventionalism or even rigid formalism, which prescribed metres and forms of composition and to some extent cramped originality of thought.

Literature reflects the spirit of the age, and in India it is a medium through which an old culture is seen to be in transition to a new. The study of English literature brought about changes both of form and substance. New themes and vehicles of expression were adopted; some forms of composition were transplanted and naturalized. All the main languages have been affected, but the effect on Hindi has perhaps been less than on others. It is so much the language of the more strictly orthodox members of the intelligentsia, as well as of the peasantry and of the women, that it is less susceptible to outside influences. There is now an abundant prose literature in which history, biography, fiction, criticism, and the essay find place. The obsession of religion and mythology has passed away. Writers take an interest in Man as well as in God, and themes are sought in contemporary life, in human relationships, and in the wonders of Nature. The swaddling clothes of Sanskrit have been thrown off and literature is no longer so constricted or conventional, but is far more catholic in range and realistic in style. At one time the predilection for English was almost a passion. It led to mere imitations in Bengal, where men instead of writing in their own language composed English verse of an inferior quality. In Maharashtra Sir Monier Monier-Williams was told in 1878 by a highly educated Marathi gentleman that he scarcely knew a man among his fellow-countrymen who could write good Marathi.<sup>1</sup> Happily this phase has almost passed away and writers find creative expression in their mother-tongue, though there is still a certain amount of mere adaptation without originality. Mr. S. S. Bharati has already mentioned the cheap and vulgar adaptations of sensational or commonplace English novels and plays which appear in Tamil, and Professor Dandekar the strange non-Indian life depicted in Marathi fiction. Great, however, as the change has been, there has been no complete

<sup>1</sup> *Modern India and the Indians* (1879), p. 219.

break with the past. Not all have bowed to the new idols. The spell of religion and mysticism endures, and the old Indian masters have their modern disciples who follow in their footsteps.

One other form of contact may be briefly referred to, that due to sport and games, which bring Europeans and Indians together in friendly rivalry and level the barriers of race, if only temporarily. Young India has taken whole-heartedly to English games and has become to a certain extent sport-minded, at least in the cities and large towns, if not as yet in rural areas. The favourite games are hockey, football, cricket, and lawn tennis, which in urban areas have become naturalized and form part of the life of the younger generation. In Kashmir there was at first some aversion from football among Brahmans because of the ceremonial impurity caused by leather, but this prejudice soon wore away, and it does not seem to have been in evidence elsewhere. The most popular game is perhaps hockey, in which India is the champion of the world, having won the last three Olympic contests. Association football appears to have come into vogue in the 'eighties with the institution of a tournament at Simla by Sir Mortimer Durand, whose name it bears, and is now played by thousands of clubs all over the country under the aegis of football associations. It is particularly popular in Calcutta and Madras, where cup ties attract huge and enthusiastic crowds. Rugby football, with all its exhilaration, has made no appeal to Indians and is not played by them. Lawn-tennis was introduced in the 'seventies, and India is now represented in Davis Cup matches. Cricket has established itself firmly; the name of Ranjitsinghji is a household word in the cricket world, and India has advanced to the dignity of test matches. The Parsis of Bombay led the way, sending teams to England in 1886 and 1888, and starting, in 1892, an annual match against the local Europeans, which developed into a quadrangular tournament between Parsis, Hindus, Muslim, and Europeans. In Bombay city as many as thirty matches may be seen in progress at the same time on the spacious Maidan; in the adjoining country cricket is, what it is not elsewhere, a village game. An observer tells us that in the fishing villages near Bombay men and boys, naked except for a loin-cloth, may be seen batting, bowling, and fielding with a surprising skill and knowledge of cricket and with an enthusiasm which shows that the game has a solid foundation.<sup>1</sup> In this as in other games, there is a spirit of real sportsmanship.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. E. Lucas on *India* (1930), p. 285.

<sup>2</sup> An exception may be mentioned as a kind of anthropological curiosity. Mr. Tyndale-Biscoe tells us that he has seen a player in a game of cricket walk



## GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

A resolution passed by the House of Commons in 1793 affirmed that it was the peculiar and bounden duty of the legislature to promote by all just and prudent means the interest and happiness of the British dominions in the East. It was thus recognized that, in the words used by Lord William Bentinck in 1804, the system was to be one which founded British greatness on Indian happiness. This necessarily involved the establishment of law and order, the administration of even-handed justice, the maintenance of public, and the protection of private, rights—in other words, the discharge of the primary functions of government as understood in the West. India, however, was not a *tabula rasa*. It was a land with well-established social and legal institutions, and the question arose whether and to what extent the system of government should follow Indian or European models and whether pre-existing institutions should be retained or should be discarded in favour of importations from the West. Questions both of principle and policy were involved. How far could the *status quo* be maintained without sacrifice of the moral and political principles of the British and without injury to their convictions of what was right? How far could administration be westernized without causing dislocation which might do more harm than good? Was, in fact, any synthesis possible between the static ideas of the East and the progressive ideas of the West? The position of the British, faced with this dilemma, has aptly been compared with that of men forced to make their watches keep time in two longitudes, neither too fast to endanger security nor too slow to impede progress.<sup>1</sup> In the end there was the usual British solution of the problem—a kind of compromise—but on the whole the tendency was to westernization, the dominant principle being that expressed by Lord Lawrence: 'In doing the best we can for the people, we are bound by our conscience and not by theirs.'<sup>2</sup>

In the early days of their dominion the British endeavoured to build on the foundations already laid, though the actual superstructure of government had collapsed. It was one of Warren Hastings's cardinal principles that the government, while discharging its responsibility as the guardian of civil rights, should, as far as possible, maintain Indian institutions. As he himself

round the wicket, make some passes, and place something on the pitch. The Brahman batman, knowing that the wicket is bewitched, is unnerved and is soon bowled; and 'all those who planned the sorcery are jubilant'. *Character Building in Kashmir* (1920), p. 22.

<sup>1</sup> See H. S. Maine, *Village Communities in the East and the West* (1876), p. 237; T. H. Ward, *The Reign of Queen Victoria* (1887), p. 528.

<sup>2</sup> Lady Edwardes, *Memorials of the Life and Letters of Major-General Sir Herbert B. Edwardes* (1886), vol. ii, p. 196.

declared, his object was to establish a system which would possess an authority founded on the ancient laws of India, and which would enable the people to be ruled with ease and moderation according to their own ideas, manners, and prejudices.<sup>1</sup>

'In a word, let this be the working principle of our government of the people, whose ease and welfare we are bound both by justice and policy to preserve: to make their laws sit as light on them as possible and to share with them the principles of our own constitution where they are capable of partaking of them consistently with their other rights and the welfare of the state.'<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, the ancient landmarks were not removed. The Hindu and Islamic systems of personal law were maintained, the Islamic penal law continued to be administered, Indian personnel was employed in the administration, and the executive system followed the lines already laid down by the Mughals, i.e. there was a chain of officials, each with jurisdiction over a definite area, through whom the orders of the government were transmitted and by whom they were executed. An Anglicizing tendency set in under Lord Cornwallis, who excluded Indians from offices of trust and responsibility, remoulded the administration more in consonance with European ideas, and revolutionized the agrarian system in Bengal, Bihar, and some adjoining areas by means of the Permanent Settlement, which introduced an English form of landed property. Landholders who had been liable to displacement by the State acquired a status resembling that of English landlords, being made owners of the soil not in recognition of any pre-existing right, but as a measure of policy dictated by English ideas of the value of a squirearchy. The Anglicizing tendency was checked in 1833, when a parliamentary committee, which held the usual inquiry into the administration of India before the renewal of the charter of the East India Company, laid down that the laws of India should be adapted to the feelings and habits of Indians rather than to those of Europeans, condemned the racial discrimination which had resulted in the exclusion of Indians from all but subordinate posts, and declared that it was recognized that the interests of Indian subjects should be consulted in preference to those of Europeans whenever the two came into conflict. This declaration, which was inspired by the humanitarian ideas derived largely from the evangelical movement in England, was a remarkable advance in the conception of the relations between a European nation and one of its dependencies. It had been the general belief that the interests of the latter should be subordinated to

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Keith, *Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy 1750-1921* (1922), vol. i, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> M. E. Monckton Jones, *Warren Hastings in Bengal 1772-1774* (1918), p. 158.



those of the former, and it was now enunciated as a guiding principle that the welfare of the subject race should have priority over the advantage of the ruling race, though it must be added that this principle was not always honoured in practice.

The Charter Act of 1833 specifically provided that no Indian should be debarred from holding any office by reason only of his religion, place of birth, descent, or colour. The Board of Directors followed this up with a dispatch pointing out that it meant that in future there should be 'no governing caste' in British India and that Indians were to be admitted to places of trust as freely and fully as regard to the due discharge of the functions attached to them would allow. In other words, capacity and not race was to be the criterion of eligibility for administrative offices. Indians were accordingly appointed in increasing numbers to responsible judicial and executive posts, but not to the *corps d'élite* represented by the Indian Civil Service, which had a monopoly of the higher posts.<sup>1</sup> There was moreover no idea of associating Indians with the government as distinct from the administration of the country. Representative institutions were regarded as absolutely out of the question; no one, however democratic his views, suggested their introduction. In the House of Commons debate on the Act of 1833 Lord Macaulay envisaged the possibility that by means of good government India might be educated into a capacity for better government and might in some future age demand European institutions, but such a prospect was admittedly visionary.

'In India', he said, 'you cannot have representative institutions. . . . We have to frame a good government for a country into which, by universal acknowledgement, we cannot introduce those institutions which all our habits, which all the reasonings of European philosophers, which all the history of our own part of the world lead us to consider as the one great security for good government.'

There was no attempt to introduce English law systematically, though, as pointed out in the next section, there was a gradual infusion of it into the judicial administration, its principles being followed or its specific provisions applied in cases where the existing systems of law failed to give any guidance. The Permanent Settlement, which was in force in Bengal, Bihar, and parts of Madras and the United Provinces, was not extended elsewhere. The land revenue administration, on which the agricultural prosperity of the people largely depends, followed old lines. The

<sup>1</sup> A son of Raja Ram Mohan Ray was, it is true, appointed to a writership, which, as *The Times* of 14 January 1836 said, 'was the first appointment to one of those situations which, in the course of promotion, lead to the highest office in the government of India and places him at once on a footing with the first among the British governors of the land'; but this was a solitary appointment and the Indian Civil Service was still a close preserve for Englishmen.

methods of assessment which were found in existence continued, though they were modified as the result of experience and study of local conditions, while a substantial change was made by the introduction of English ideas of proprietorship. Mistakes were made at first owing to the intricacies of a strange system of land tenures, as, for example, in the North-Western Provinces, where, it has been said, 'our early Commissioners and Collectors were working in the dark or, at best, were as mariners in a troubled or dangerous sea without chart or compass'.<sup>1</sup> But knowledge was gradually gained, mistakes were rectified, and the essential features of the Indian agrarian system were preserved. This was due mainly to the existence of a school of administrators with whom the conservation of indigenous institutions was an article of faith.

In Madras Sir Thomas Munro maintained the system, known as ryotwari settlement, by which the State dealt direct with the cultivators and recognized no intermediate proprietors, this, he insisted, being the old custom of the country.<sup>2</sup> In the Deccan the same policy was followed by Elphinstone, whose instructions to his officers were: 'Maintain the native system . . . above all, make no innovations.'<sup>3</sup> In the north-west the rights of cultivators were preserved by the settlement which, beginning in 1833, resulted in a record of landed rights which has been described as a Domesday Book and Magna Charta combined. Here too the integrity of the village communities was respected and their joint responsibility was recognized by James Thomason, Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces from 1843 to 1853. His policy was summed up in his dictum: 'Support old institutions and do not distract the people by attempting a new one.'<sup>4</sup> His influence is reflected in the saying of one of his officers that for the British to set to work to improve or alter existing institutions would be about as wise as for the Indian village communities to attempt to regulate the British constitution.<sup>5</sup> In the Punjab again the village system was made the basis of administration, village communities which were collapsing or dying out being restored and given new life, while the customary law was incorporated in the law of the land unless it came into conflict with moral principles or public policy, when it was replaced by the higher law of justice, equity, and good conscience.

<sup>1</sup> C. Raikes, *Notes on the North-Western Provinces of India* (1862), pp. 65-6.

<sup>2</sup> There were, however, some villages which clung to the principle of joint responsibility for the land revenue and for fifty years disregarded the individual assessments made by government, and lumping them together, redivided the totals in their own way among different families. Sir George Campbell in *Systems of Land Tenure in Various Countries* (1881), p. 255.

<sup>3</sup> J. S. Cotton, *Mountstuart Elphinstone* (1892), p. 136.

<sup>4</sup> Sir W. W. Hunter, *James Thomason* (1893), p. 161.

<sup>5</sup> C. Raikes, *Notes on the North-Western Provinces of India* (1862), p. 121.



The desire to preserve continuity with the past and to make no revolutionary changes was also apparent in religious policy. This was the diametrical opposite of that pursued by the Portuguese, who had lent the weight of civil authority to missionary propaganda and gave preferential treatment to Indian converts. Long before it had political power the East India Company had shown respect for the religions of India; according to Ovington, a chaplain who went to Surat in 1685, the factory chapel there, though decently embellished, contained no figures of living beings, so as to give no occasion of offence to Muslims. After it ceased to be merely a trading corporation, the Company for a long time did its best to keep missionaries out of India and discriminated against Indian Christians in South India, where they were numerous. Until 1831 they were excluded from appointments in the judicial service and from legal practice as pleaders, the Company showing less tolerance to them than an Indian prince like the Raja of Tanjore, who admitted them freely to office. Not only were the religious observances of Hindus and Muslims scrupulously respected, but official countenance was given to them. Troops paraded and military bands played during Hindu festivals; guns were fired to announce the appearance of the new moon which marks the close of the month of Ramzan and the end of the fast which is incumbent upon Muslims. In 1802, on the conclusion of the peace of Amiens, a deputation from the government went in procession to the principal shrine of Kali in the capital city of Calcutta and presented Rs. 5,000 to the idol as a thank-offering for the success of the British arms against Napoleon—a proceeding which may fairly be likened to bowing down in the temple of Rimmon.

Further, the Company undertook liabilities which had been created or recognized by its predecessors in rule in regard to religious endowments and establishments. A Regulation passed in 1817 stated in its preamble that it was the duty of the government to provide that all Hindu religious endowments should be applied according to the intent and will of the grantor, and government accordingly assumed the administration of many temples. The proceeds of a tax on pilgrims were devoted to the upkeep of the temple of Jagannath at Puri, as well as to the provision of accommodation for pilgrims, so that the Company was taunted with being the churchwarden of an idol. The Madras government was responsible for the administration of over 7,500 Hindu shrines in 1833, and its connexion with them extended to details of management. Officials regulated their funds, repaired their buildings, appointed their servants, kept the temple cars in order, and, when necessary, employed forced labour to drag the latter—a form of *corvée* from which Indian Christians were not exempt and for

refusal to share in which conscientious objectors were liable to be beaten.

An outcry was raised in Great Britain against the association of the Company with Hinduism, which was represented as giving State sanction to idolatry and as unworthy of a Christian nation.<sup>1</sup> The Directors yielded to the force of public opinion and in 1833 issued orders<sup>2</sup> that the Government of India should cease to have any direct connexion with religious institutions and should abolish the pilgrim taxes. The latter order was given legislative form in 1840, and next year instructions were given that no troops should be called out or military bands allowed to play in honour of Indian festivals, largely in consequence of the action taken in 1838 by the Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army, Sir Peregrine Maitland, who resigned his command by way of protest against troops being required to assist in Hindu celebrations. Finally, in 1863, the government ceased to have any concern with religious endowments, which were made over to local committees or trustees.<sup>3</sup>

The dissociation of the government from religion was opposed to Indian sentiment, to which the conception of a purely secular state was foreign. Both Muslims and Hindus cherished the idea of an intimate connexion between Church and State. A divorce between the two was opposed to their conceptions of the duty of the sovereign as maintainer of the faith. The British government, of course, professed neither Islam nor Hinduism, but as the successor of Muslim and Hindu sovereigns it was held to have inherited their obligations and it was expected to discharge them. Their repudiation was regarded as an abdication of one of the essential functions of government, as a deliberate dereliction of duty, especially in South India, where the ruling power had for centuries managed temples and their funds and the local representative of the British government had been looked on as the friendly guardian of religion.

On the whole it may be said that during the first half of the

<sup>1</sup> In the third edition of Pegu's *India's Cries to British Humanity* (1830), five chapters, covering 92 pages, were devoted to 'British Connection with Idolatry'.

<sup>2</sup> The comprehensive nature of these orders is an index of the extent to which government was, or might be, associated with temple worship. It was laid down that British functionaries should take no part in the interior management of temples, in the customs, manners, and religious proceedings of their priests and attendants, in the arrangement of their ceremonies, and generally in the conduct of their interior economy. In all matters relating to temples, worship, festivals, religious practices, and ceremonial observances the people should be left to themselves. Moreover, if there were complaints of diversion of temple funds to other purposes, they must seek redress from the courts of law and not from the executive authority, which had hitherto intervened in cases of malversation.

<sup>3</sup> An Act was passed which forbade the Government of India and all its officers to undertake the superintendence of any property granted for the support of a religious establishment or to take part in the management of an endowment made for the maintenance of such an establishment.



nineteenth century the general trend of administration was conservative. The guiding principle was that expressed in Lord Falkland's words: 'When it is not necessary to change, it is necessary not to change'. Continuity with the past was preserved and indigenous institutions were maintained—a process admirably described by James Thomason in 1853.

'We have not', he said, 'swept over the country like a torrent, destroying all that it found and leaving nothing but what it has itself deposited. Our course has rather been that of a gently swelling inundation which leaves the former surface undisturbed and spreads over it a richer mould, from which the vegetation may derive a new verdure and the landscape a beauty which was unknown before. Such has been our course in the civil administration. We examined the existing systems, retained whatever of them we found to be right and just, and then engrafted on this basis new maxims derived from our own institutions.'

There was the less desire to interfere with old-established institutions because the conduct of government was largely regulated by the doctrines of the *laissez faire* school, current in Great Britain, of which the main tenet was that nothing conduced so much to the well-being of the community as the pursuit of individual interests hampered by the least possible interference from government. The motto of the age was self-help, not State-help, and the intervention of public authority was restricted. The State was not expected to perform functions, in regard, for instance, to education, public health, and economic organization, which are now regarded as among its legitimate or essential activities. The Government of India has always reacted to views current in Great Britain, and it subscribed to the *laissez faire* doctrines during the first half of the nineteenth century and the early part of its second half with one notable exception, education having been accepted as a State responsibility since 1813, when the Charter Act provided for a grant for educational purposes in pursuance of a resolution of the House of Commons affirming that, in order to promote the interests and happiness of the people of India, government should take measures for the introduction of useful knowledge and of religious and moral improvement among them. It was regarded as an axiomatic truth that the law of supply and demand should be allowed to operate without State interference. Honest, but obstinate and mistaken, adherence to this belief led to terrible mortality in the Orissa famine of 1866-8. It was assumed that the law of demand and supply would inevitably operate to save millions from starving, though it was unable to do so in the absence of means of transport. The head of the provincial administration

<sup>1</sup> Sir W. W. Hunter, *James Thomason* (1893), pp. 183-4.

declared that if he were to attempt to interfere with prices he would consider himself no better than a thief, a sentiment which reads strangely at a time when there is a system of control in Great Britain of the prices of various commodities.

The government was compelled by the force of circumstances and its own sense of responsibility for the public welfare to abandon the *laissez faire* policy. It had hoped that the resources of the country would be developed by means of private enterprise but found that private enterprise was not sufficiently forthcoming. Its lack was due partly to the fact that the people had little or no idea or experience of co-operative work outside small areas such as villages, and partly to a habit of mind which distinguishes between the legitimate spheres of governmental and individual action, the people looking to government to take the initiative in matters concerning the public welfare and regarding it as improper for private persons to intrude on them, unless commanded to do so. There was consequently an absence of the spirit of public service and the government was constantly forced to undertake work which in western countries is performed by local organizations or non-official agencies. 'One of the greatest drawbacks', wrote Lord Dalhousie in 1853, 'to the advance of this country in material prosperity has been the total dependence upon the government in which the community has placed itself and its apparent helplessness to do anything for itself.' These words formed part of his famous minute on railways, which, in the absence of private enterprise in India, were to be built and extended by means of British capital and British energy, to which he looked for the development of trade and industry. In other spheres of activity no outside assistance could be expected and the government was forced to take action itself. In particular, it had to control the relations of different classes in order to protect the weak and submissive against the strong and aggressive. Legislative enactments were not in themselves sufficient to prevent the exploitation of large classes which were either too ignorant or too poor or too cowed to take advantage of their provisions. Special measures had to be taken for the protection of the rights and interests of cultivators, debtors, and primitive tribes, whose welfare depended largely on the executive action of the government and its officers, by which the law had both to be implemented and supplemented.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the pendulum swung in the direction of greater westernization of the system of government. There was a demand for more precise methods of administration and for an extension of the range of governmental functions, as the result of the pressure partly of public opinion in



Great Britain and partly of educated opinion in India, which became more exacting in its requirements. As the government became more closely organized and its functions were enlarged, the services of professional administrators became more necessary, and it became more of a government by experts, Indian as well as British, who were exempt from interference by popularly constituted bodies. It was from this time that the administration began to be called bureaucratic. The term was correct in one sense, inasmuch as the work of government was in the hands of governors by profession, which as J. S. Mill said, is the essence and meaning of bureaucracy. It also connotes, however, government by and from offices, whose chief task is to make and enforce rules and regulations, and from this point of view it was not altogether applicable.<sup>1</sup> The system in India was not one of mere office control. There were secretariats and various departments for special branches of administration, such as excise, education, forests, public works, and jails; there were rules and regulations galore; but the basis of the administration, the essential feature which differentiated it from an impersonal bureaucracy of the western kind, was the district officer, in whom local authority was concentrated and who was peripatetic for a considerable part of the year, moving from place to place, in touch with all classes, investigating local conditions, inquiring into complaints, redressing, if possible, grievances on the spot, and, in general, giving the people a form of personal rule. His name and fame live after him, if only he is left long enough in a district to make an impress on it, whereas the memory of the secretariat officer is soon lost in oblivion.

The range of State activities was steadily extended, English law was made the basis of codes which followed in quick succession, and the influence of English principles and practice was seen in the general administration. Sir Fitzjames Stephen, who, as Law Member of Council from 1869 to 1872, had an important part in the codification of the law, expressed the opinion that the Mutiny was in its essence a break-down of an old system, the renunciation of an attempt to effect an impossible compromise between the Asiatic and the European view of things, legal, military, and administrative.<sup>2</sup> The compromise might not have been impossible, but the Mutiny left British officials with little stomach for compromise

<sup>1</sup> The commentary of Sir Henry Maine is of interest. 'The dyslogistic language now coming into use imputes nothing but knowledge and experience. The Indian bureaucracy is merely a barbarous foreign phrase applied with gross inaccuracy to as remarkable a body of public servants as any country has produced, engaged in administering the affairs of a vast population under perfectly definite and intelligently stated rules.' T. H. Ward, *The Reign of Queen Victoria* (1887), p. 524.

<sup>2</sup> Loc. cit., G. O. Trevelyan, *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* (1889), p. 302.

and with feelings of bitterness against oriental methods. The old idea of governing the people in their own way had been so disastrous in its results that the government must now do what it considered best for them, whether to their liking or not.

The government was, as Lord Lawrence pointed out in 1858, a trustee for the people, but not in the sense that it was bound by the will of the people. 'We have not been elected or placed in power by the people, but we are here through our moral superiority, by the force of circumstances, by the will of Providence. This alone constitutes our charter to govern India.'<sup>1</sup> The criterion of public good was not the popular will but the ruling power's ideas of duty and obligation, and it held itself bound to do good to the people according to its own light and not theirs. The idea of trusteeship in the sense of tutelage as a training for self-government was at the same time not forgotten in spite of the revulsion of feeling caused by the Mutiny. There were men like Sir Herbert Edwardes who could declare publicly that England should set before her the policy of first fitting India for freedom and then setting her free. England, which at the time (1860) was shouting across the narrow seas 'Italy for the Italians', would in time, he hoped, lift its voice still higher and shout across the world 'India for the Indians'. It might take years—even a century—to fit India for self-government, but it was a thing worth doing and a thing that might be done. England might then gladly and proudly leave India, the stately daughter she had reared, to walk the future with a free imperial step, with her resources developed and her people enlightened, awakened, and no longer isolated in the East but linked with the civilized races of the West. He himself contemplated an India no longer idolatrous or caste-ridden, but converted to, and regenerated by, Christianity, and he held that till she was leavened with Christianity she would be unfit for freedom; but others took a more secular view and did not postulate christianization as a qualification for self-government.<sup>2</sup>

It has been said by a wise Indian administrator that what the masses desire above all things is to be left alone, but it is the misfortune of the mission of England that it cannot leave them alone.<sup>3</sup> Actually its mission was to give India the best form of government that it was capable of giving and India was capable of receiving, and if this task was to be accomplished, the *status quo* had to be disturbed. Specialized departments of government were created which affected the individual and the public in many different ways. The preservation of indigenous forms of organization was

<sup>1</sup> See *Memorials of the Life and Letters of Major-General Sir Herbert Edwardes* (1886), vol. ii, p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii, pp. 242-3.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Charles Aitchison in *Lord Lawrence* (1897), p. 144.



no longer a primary consideration; the spirit of individualism, so congenial to the British temperament, led to the recognition of individual in place of collective responsibility. The watchword was progress and reform, and the semi-communal village life, which, it must be admitted, was largely static, was regarded as unequal to the requirements of a progressive administration. In order therefore to attain efficiency, work which had been done by the co-operative efforts of villagers was brought under control or handed over to agents responsible to the government and not to the village community. This general statement of the trend of administration is, however, subject to considerable qualification. The country being too poor to bear the expense of the machinery of a modern European State, considerations of economy limited the strength of the administrative staff and circumscribed the circle of its activities. The State was not a Leviathan, and there was nothing like regimentation. Moreover, in dealing with backward races which had reached a less advanced stage a policy of conservation was followed in many cases, as far as was compatible with the requirements of a modern system. Among the tribes of Assam the chiefs and head-men are an integral part of the administrative machinery. Their authority is recognized and supported, and they control village life with a minimum of supervision. In the Santal Parganas the system of village administration by head-men has been preserved and has escaped the disintegration common elsewhere. In the district of Angul in Orissa there is still a simple form of administration which has been in force since 1847. The village communities are maintained; village head-men collect rents, perform police duties, and investigate cases. The villagers pay neither school rates nor road cess, but raise the money required for education by voluntary contributions and themselves provide the labour required for the upkeep of school buildings, village roads, and the reservoirs used for the purpose of irrigation.

The cult of efficiency was followed without any doubts as to its virtue till well into the twentieth century, and its high priest was Lord Curzon. 'Efficiency', he declared, 'has been our gospel, the key-note of our administration.' His justification of his creed should at the same time be quoted. 'Efficiency of administration is, in my view, a synonym for the contentment of the governed. It is the one means of affecting the people in their homes and of adding only an atom it may be, but still an atom, to the happiness of the people.' Like many other Victorians, he held that national prosperity lay in their material well-being. 'This was the *summum bonum*, all that India in the stage she had reached either needed or could desire. He conscientiously and steadfastly believed that the good of India would be secured not by self-government

but by good government; and good government must be of the British pattern and no other. 'We have come here with a civilization, an education, and a morality which we are vain enough, without disparagement to others, to think the best that have ever been seen, and we have been placed, by the Power that ordains all, in the seats of the mighty.' The rule of India being a British rule, and any other rule being in the circumstances of the case impossible, the tone and standard should be set by those who had created it and were responsible for it. By virtue of their upbringing, education, and knowledge of the principles of government, Englishmen possessed the habits of mind and vigour of character essential for the task. Consequently, the highest posts of civil employment, i.e., those in the Indian Civil Service, though open to Indians, should as a general rule be held by Englishmen. Outside this *corps d'élite*, however, the policy was to restrict rather than extend European agency and to enlist Indians as fully as possible in the service of the State; and Lord Curzon had good reason for claiming that its result had been to establish a European system of government entrusted largely to non-European hands.<sup>1</sup> He looked forward to the time when India would be raised from the level of a dependency to the position which was bound to be hers, if it was not hers already, that of the greatest partner in the Empire,<sup>2</sup> but her advance was to be by means of paternal government under British control. Government was and should remain, a benevolent despotism; if it sacrificed its despotism, it would sacrifice its benevolence. In 1900 he expressed the belief that the Congress was tottering to its fall and said that one of his great ambitions was to assist it to a peaceful demise. A little over three years later he admitted that public opinion was daily becoming more powerful; but at the end of his term of office he briefly dismissed the idea of political advance with the remark that he had not offered political concessions because he did not regard it as wisdom or statesmanship in the interests of India to do so.<sup>3</sup> It can scarcely be doubted that he overlooked or under-estimated the strength of the forces which were at work.

There had already been some political progress. One result of the increasingly close nexus of administration was to create conditions with which a system of autocracy, however benevolent, was incompatible. So long as the people were left largely to themselves, such a system could be maintained, but the more detailed regulation of their affairs made it desirable that they should be consulted and given a voice in their government. This principle was recog-

<sup>1</sup> See Sir T. Raleigh, *Lord Curzon in India* (1906), pp. 343-6, 554, 564.

<sup>2</sup> The Earl of Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon* (1928), vol. ii, p. 327.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 151, 326, 420.



nized by the constitution of Legislative Councils in 1861, and more fully by the Indian Councils Act of 1892, which widened the basis of government by giving further opportunities to non-official Indian elements to take part in its work. A step in the direction of autonomy in local affairs was also taken in 1870, when Lord Mayo's government issued a resolution acknowledging the need of local interest and supervision for the management of funds devoted to education, sanitation, medical relief, and local public works. With this object a system of local self-government was to be developed and municipal institutions were to be strengthened. This was followed by a series of legislative enactments, which established a system of local bodies organized not on Indian but on British lines, and which gave partial effect to the elective principle.

The change which had by this time come over the conception of the problem of government cannot be better illustrated than by the remarks made in 1878 by the Viceroy, Lord Lytton, with which may be compared the views already quoted, which had been expressed by Warren Hastings about a century before.

'The problem undertaken by the British rulers of India (a political problem more perplexing in its conditions and, as regards the result of its solution, more far-reaching than any which, since the dissolution of the Pax Romana, has been undertaken by a conquering race) is the application of the most refined principles of European government and some of the most artificial institutions of European society to a vast Oriental population, in whose history, habits, and traditions they have had no previous existence. . . .'

After referring to the fact that to the vast mass of the people British rule appeared to be a foreign, and more or less uncongenial system of administration, which was scarcely, if at all, intelligible to the greater number of those for whose benefit it was maintained, he went on to say:

'It is a fact which there is no disguising, and it is also one which cannot be too constantly or too anxiously recognized, that by enforcing these principles and establishing these institutions we have placed and must permanently maintain ourselves at the head of a gradual but gigantic revolution—the greatest and most momentous social, moral, and religious, as well as political, revolution which perhaps the world has ever witnessed.'

This diagnosis of the processes in operation is remarkable for its insight and is of more than temporary or transitory interest, indicating, as it does, the lines which were now being consciously followed.

<sup>1</sup> Lady Betty Balfour, *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration* (1899), pp. 511-12.

A lesson learnt by the British from their own history is that a constitution should be a growth, not a creation *per saltum*. They were therefore chary of making new constitutions for India, 'as though', to quote Arthur Young's remark about the French, 'constitutions were a pudding to be made from a recipe'. Three new constitutions however have been inaugurated within the last thirty-one years, each more liberal than the last. The first, which came into force in 1909, was an attempt to blend principles of autocracy inherited from Hindu kings and Mughal emperors with principles of democracy derived from Great Britain. In 1917 the British government announced that its policy was the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. This definitely marked the parting of the ways. Absolute government was to be discarded; responsible government by the people themselves was to come ultimately, although there was as yet no popular demand for it. There was a demand from an educated minority, but the great majority had as yet neither the desire nor the capacity for it. It was, however, felt by the British government that a beginning could and should be made for the sake of the national life of India. The people should not be dependent on a paternal government but learn to stand on their own feet. For this purpose the forms of government which had grown up on British soil were to be transplanted to a country with a long tradition of autocracy. 'We believe', wrote the authors of the scheme, 'that the placid, pathetic contentment of the masses is not the soil on which Indian nationhood will grow and that, in deliberately disturbing it, we are working for her highest good.' 'Our reason is the faith that is in us';<sup>1</sup> and that faith was western in conception.

Nationalism, striving to develop a sense of nationhood, grew apace during the next decade (1921-31). Political consciousness increased, and, alien though they were, the principles and practices of the British parliamentary system were accepted as the norm. Finally, in 1931, the British government announced its determination that the responsibility for the government of British India should be transferred from the British parliament to Indian legislatures (central and provincial). There was to be a democratic government of the English pattern, with an executive responsible to a popular assembly, the members of which in their turn were to be responsible to an electorate—in other words, a parliamentary system modelled on that of Great Britain. Six years later a reformed constitution came into effect, by which a decisive

<sup>1</sup> E. S. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford, *Report on India Constitutional Reform* (1918), para. 144.



voice in the civil administration of the different provinces has been given to elected representatives, while provision is made for the creation of an all-Indian federation combining British India and the States in a political unity, with representatives of the electoral system of British India and representatives of the personal rule of the Indian States forming a unified government.

We may now turn from British India to the India of the Princes.

When the tide of British conquest spread over India, it did not submerge the States, which were left like an archipelago of islands, great and small, surrounded by British India. Some were large and powerful, but the majority were petty principalities which had split off from their parent States and established their independence in the chaos following the dissolution of the Mughal empire. The British maintained the *status quo* and, by preserving the integrity of minor States which would eventually have been absorbed by more powerful neighbours, prevented the process of readjustment which would otherwise have taken place. The political system which was found in existence was, so to speak, petrified, and permanency was given to what was really a state of transition. The States number 562 in all, but 327 are of minor importance. Some have wide territories and are comparable to European countries; the area of Hyderabad and of Kashmir is about equal to that of Great Britain; Mysore is larger than the Irish Free State. The greater number however are comparable to small European units like Liechtenstein, Luxemburg, or Monaco. Some are minute, consisting, it may be, of a few villages or only equal in size to a single village, and resemble a seignorial estate more than a State in the usual connotation of the term.

The relations of the British government and the States, with their intermingled territories and many points of contact, naturally raised a number of difficult questions. The British were pledged to maintain the authority of their rulers without interfering with their internal administration, but was such a pledge to prevent the introduction of western principles, but not western forms, of government? How, to mention some concrete instances, could practices such as slavery, suttee, and infanticide, which were prohibited in British India, be allowed to continue in adjoining State territories? The law would obviously be inoperative if British subjects had merely to cross the border and burn widows and kill infant children with impunity. Was the suzerain to remain inactive when a State was rent by faction tending to anarchy, or was falling into financial ruin, or when the people were being goaded by oppression into rebellion? When a climax had been reached, was it merely to depose a ruler and substitute another, so that the State might continue as an autonomous unit under the rule of an

Indian Prince? Or was it to assume the administration temporarily in order to restore order, rehabilitate the finances, and introduce improved methods of administration? Or was it to cut the Gordian knot and substitute British for Indian rule by annexing the State—a measure which, in the eyes of those who were convinced of the innate superiority of the British system of government, was held to be in the best interests of the people themselves?

For a long time there was no clear, uniform, and consistent policy. The principle enunciated by the Marquess Wellesley in 1804 was to secure to each of the principal States the unmolested exercise of its authority under the general protection of the British power, and at first the East India Company adhered to a policy of non-intervention. When in 1826 Sir Charles Metcalfe advanced the view that the British by virtue of their position as the paramount power were the supreme guardians of law, tranquillity, and right, the Directors promptly repudiated such a proposition and laid down that the Princes were not to be interfered with except to secure the payment of the tribute due from them. This policy was followed in the case of Oudh, though a Persian minister, who vainly endeavoured to reform the administration, pointed out that non-intervention was like the selfish indifference of a man who refused to stretch out a helping hand to save another from falling down a precipice. A treaty, it is true, was concluded by which the British government was empowered to assume the administration in case of gross and systematic oppression, anarchy, and misrule, but no advantage was taken of this provision though all the conditions prevailed which justified its application. In a few cases the government intervened and proceeded to annexation or took over the administration temporarily. Thus, Coorg, of which the Raja was a homicidal maniac, was annexed, while Mysore, where the people had been driven into rebellion by misgovernment, was taken over in 1831 and remained under British control for fifty years.

The general tendency was against annexation until 1841, when the Government of India definitely decided in its favour by announcing its intention to 'persevere in the clear and direct course of abandoning no just and honourable accession of territory and revenue, while all existing claims of right are at the same time scrupulously respected'. In spite of this Gwalior was not annexed after the war of 1844, but, on the other hand, Sind was annexed the year before by what Sir Charles Napier sardonically called 'a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality'. Other States were annexed either because they were suffering from scandalous misgovernment or because they were held to be lawfully escheated to the suzerain under what is called the doctrine of lapse. This is best explained in Lord Dalhousie's words, viz., that



the British government was 'bound not to put aside or neglect such rightful opportunities of acquiring territory or revenue as may from time to time present themselves from the lapse of subordinate States by the failure of all heirs of every description whatsoever or from the failure of heirs natural, where the succession can be sustained only by the sanction of the government being given to the ceremony of adoption according to Hindu law'. This sanction Lord Dalhousie refused to give, and a certain number of States were consequently treated as escheats and made part of British territory. A son adopted by a Ruling Prince could inherit his private property and perform the rites necessary for the salvation of his soul, so that the religious obligations of a Hindu were not prejudiced; but a distinction was made between succession to private property and succession to the rulership, and the sanction of the paramount power was made a pre-requisite condition to adoption for the latter purpose. There was justification for the exercise of this prerogative in old-established Indian practice, as the consent of the suzerain had to be obtained to the adoption of a successor to a Hindu principality before the ceremony took place. There was, however, the important difference that the suzerain had not necessarily or usually proceeded to escheat the State if and when sanction was refused. It may also be noted that the doctrine of lapse was not applied to all States but only to what Lord Dalhousie called subordinate States or dependent principalities, i.e., States which had been created by the British government and were in a subordinate relation to it. Great States with sovereign or quasi-sovereign powers which dated back to a period anterior to British rule were excluded from its operation.

To some extent this policy was based on political considerations. Dalhousie himself said that he was anxious to get rid of petty intervening principalities which might be a means of annoyance but could never be a source of strength to the ruling power, and by getting rid of them to add to the resources of the public treasury. But the dominant principle was that the British government was responsible for the welfare of the people in the States as well as in British India, and that their best interests could only be served by extending to them the blessings of British rule, both present and prospective. Only in this way could they be secured in 'a perpetuity of that just and mild government which, under native rulers, they enjoyed only by fits and starts'. He was not blind to the fact that such a policy might be opposed to Indian sentiment, but sentimental considerations had no weight against what he regarded as the paramount duty of giving the people good government whenever possible. He himself said that he was never in favour of annexation unless a State was liable to lapse for want

of heirs or to forfeiture on account of misconduct, but 'when a principality does so fall to our disposal, it does seem to me cruel to hand over its inhabitants to be squeezed and skinned by a native despot'<sup>1</sup>—a general condemnation which was certainly justified in some was equally certainly not justified in all cases.<sup>2</sup>

The annexations carried out by Lord Dalhousie have been represented as a contributory cause of the Mutiny, but they did not alienate the class directly affected, the Princes and Chiefs. Realizing that the struggle was one of settled government against anarchy, they rallied as a rule to the side of the British, and they reaped their reward in the announcement made by Queen Victoria that their government would be perpetuated and the representation and dignity of their houses continued. The doctrine of lapse was finally and definitely abandoned in 1860, when the right of the Princes to adopt heirs was recognized and a guarantee was given that their rule would be perpetuated and the integrity of their States preserved, the British government reserving, however, the right to intervene in cases of flagrant abuse of power and misgovernment. This was a complete renunciation of any desire on the part of the British government for the appropriation of territory. The remedy for misrule was no longer annexation, but merely, in the last resort, the deposition of an incapable or vicious ruler and the installation of another with a greater sense of responsibility. At the same time it was impressed on the Princes and Chiefs that, while their rights and privileges would be respected and they would be secured in the legitimate exercise of their powers and prerogatives, good government was expected from them. There was, it is true, some derogation from their powers and privileges, by the abandonment of certain attributes of sovereignty, e.g., the right to levy transit duties, mint money, and maintain armies, but these changes were made with their consent. Autocracy was recognized, but it had to be benevolent autocracy. The Government of India was precluded from issuing commands, but it made its desires known so definitely that they were tantamount to demands.<sup>3</sup> Not content with enunciating general principles, it pointed out the duties of rulers in detail.

<sup>1</sup> Loc. cit., *Cambridge History of India* (1929), vol. v, p. 587.

<sup>2</sup> The statement, however, was not a public utterance, but was made in a private letter, in which some freedom of expression is permissible.

<sup>3</sup> For example Lord Mayo, Viceroy of India from 1869 to 1872, in an address to the Princes and Chiefs of Rajputana, said: 'If we support you in your power, we expect in return good government. We demand that, throughout the length and breadth of Rajputana, justice and order shall prevail; that every man's property shall be secure; that the traveller shall come and go in safety; that the cultivator shall enjoy the fruits of his labour and the trader the produce of his commerce; that you shall make roads and undertake the construction of those works of irrigation which will improve the condition of the people and swell the revenues of your States; that you shall encourage education and provide for the relief of the sick.' Loc. cit., Sir W. W. Hunter, *Earl of Mayo* (1891), p. 101.



The modern western conception of a ruler's responsibility was inculcated, and by no one more distinctly than by Lord Curzon, who laid down that the first and paramount duty of a Prince was towards the people over whom he ruled. The ruler must be their servant as well as their master; his *gadi* was 'not intended to be a divan of indulgence, but the stern seat of duty'. He gave practical application to this definition of duty by laying down that visits to other countries would only be permitted by the Government of India if they were likely to be of public as well as personal advantage, while repeated absences from India would be regarded as a dereliction of public duty.<sup>1</sup> In this and other ways a certain amount of pressure was brought to bear, and the States were by no means left to work on their own lines without outside guidance.

Advantage, moreover, was taken of the minority of Princes and Chiefs to introduce reforms and higher standards. Until they attained their majority, the Government of India, acting in a tutelary capacity, constituted councils of regency, and in many cases associated British officers with them, so that without the traditional organization being dislocated, a combination of British and Indian methods of administration was produced. At the same time young Princes were educated by English tutors or guardians, whose influence was very much healthier than that of the *zenana*. A system of western education, accompanied by training in the duties of a ruler, was also provided by means of Chiefs' Colleges, first initiated by Lord Mayo, which reproduced some of the features of English public schools.<sup>2</sup> All these factors combined have helped to generate a sense of responsibility to their subjects, which is said to be spreading among all the States and growing year by year.<sup>3</sup>

Since 1860 the States seem to have been infused by a new spirit of progress, created by the influence of western ideas and by the moral force of the example set by the Government of India, assisted by its precepts and a certain amount of insistence. Although some States are less advanced than other States, and some rulers have less sense of responsibility than other rulers, there has been a general enlightenment, a greater desire to do their duty, and a greater conscientiousness in the conduct of their affairs. In the larger States at least<sup>4</sup> the administration has been remodelled and

<sup>1</sup> Earl of Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon* (1928), pp. 89-92.

<sup>2</sup> There are now five Chiefs' Colleges for different areas: Mayo College at Ajmer for Rajputana, the Daly College at Indore for Central India, the Aitchison College at Lahore for the Punjab, the Rajkumar College at Rajkot for Kathiawar, and the Rajkumar College at Rajpur for the Central Provinces, Bihar, and Orissa.

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Indian States Committee, 1928-29* (1929), p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> There are, however, a number of petty States, so small in area and so lacking in financial resources that they are unable to provide the organization necessary for administration. British officers consequently exercise jurisdiction on behalf of the Chiefs, who themselves exercise little more than judicial powers.

standards have risen. British models of judicial organization, education, public works, famine relief, and medical aid have been followed, but not slavishly copied. Trained administrators from British India have been appointed as Diwans, Ministers, and heads of departments. Some forty States have High Courts; a few have civil services organized on the lines of the Indian Civil Service and animated by the same spirit;<sup>1</sup> three (Hyderabad, Mysore, and Travancore) have established universities.

Formerly one could often tell that one had crossed the border between British India and one of the States from the mere appearance of the people and the state of the country. There is no longer such a contrast. It was remarked in 1918 that 'nowadays the visitor to such places as Jeypore, Gwalior, Mysore, and many others, with their architectural beauties, their modern institutions, the high standard of order, comfort, and contentment observable on every hand, and maintained without friction, comes away with the feeling that he has seen India at its best and happiest, and many have said it'.<sup>2</sup> The advance then noticed has been sustained and accelerated. By way of illustration we may take the case of one of the most progressive States, Travancore. Here there is a bicameral legislature, with a non-official majority in both Houses, which has the right to make laws, resolutions, and interpellations, and which exercises financial control, the budget being presented to both Houses in the form of demands for grants. Much of the legislation is of a modern and advanced character; laws have been passed on such diverse matters as joint-stock enterprise, factories, trade disputes, and women's rights. Women have had the franchise since 1920. One-fifth of the revenue is spent on education and the standard of literacy is high—41 per cent. for men and 17 per cent. for women (compared with 16 and 3 per cent. respectively for all India). There are 3,000 educational institutions, including twelve colleges, of which one is a Law college and another an Ayurvedic Medical College. A civil service examination has been instituted for the recruitment of candidates for the higher branches of the public services. Temples have been thrown open to the untouchables, and a Protector of Backward Communities has been appointed in order to promote their uplift. Last, but not least

<sup>1</sup> Speaking from personal experience of the Hyderabad civil servant, Sir Richard Chevenix Trench, who was a member of H.E.H. the Nizam's Executive Council, remarks: 'A few days spent on tour in his company would convince the most confirmed die-hard that British officers have no monopoly of sympathy with the ignorant and often helpless villager. For his whole heart is in his work whether he is engaged in rural uplift, the development of newly irrigated areas, the creation of market centres, the opening of village communications, the inspection of crops, the championship of some depressed community, or any other of his multifarious duties.' *Asiatic Review*, January, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> G. M. Cheaney, *India under Experiment* (1918), p. 167.



significant as a sign of modernism, air mail services to Bombay and Trichinopoly are in operation. Instances of modernization in other States might be multiplied. Factories and mills, chemical works, and aerodromes are springing up. In some places the streets are lit with electric light, and electric power is being applied for industrial undertakings and irrigation. Patiala has established a centre for anti-rabies treatment and a Rontgen Institute for X-ray treatment.

Not all the States have risen to the same level. There are some of which the rulers endeavour to keep up the pomp and state of sovereigns on totally inadequate resources and have not the means, even if they had the desire, to introduce improvements for the benefit of their subjects. The President of the All-India States People's Conference (Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru) went so far as to affirm, in the presidential address which he delivered in February 1939, that, though some were advanced industrially and educationally, and some had competent rulers or ministers, the majority were sinks of reaction, incompetence, and unrestrained autocratic power, sometimes exercised by vicious and degraded individuals. This sweeping indictment cannot be accepted, but there is no doubt that many States have failed to reach the standard of the larger and more progressive States. This is recognized by the Princes themselves, as is apparent from the statement made by the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes at a conference of the Princes and other representatives of the States held in June 1939. According to this statement, the Princes had unanimously decided to recommend individual States to examine their administrations, where needed, and apply certain basic tests, which included the necessity for clear and codified law ensuring a reign of law, a properly manned judiciary, an efficient and adequate police, a clear demarcation between the personal expenditure of the ruler and State expenditure, and a clear-cut programme of beneficial activities. Such a recommendation is in itself sufficient to show that the Princes themselves realize that there are backward rulers whose houses should be set in order.

A certain number of States have introduced *suo motu* representative institutions, legislative and municipal. Legislative councils have been set up in some thirty States, and though they are mostly of a merely consultative character, there has been in some cases a process of development like that which has gone on in British India, councils which started as mere consultative bodies having in course of time acquired, or new bodies having been created with, greater powers and a fuller measure of representation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For example, in Mysore a representative assembly was first constituted in 1881, but it was a body without powers. It was supplemented in 1907 by a legislative

The establishment in the States of legislative councils, even with limited powers and only a partial representation of the people, is in itself a notable advance politically. It is an abrogation of the principle of autocracy, indicating that the ruler realizes that he must provide means for the expression of his people's will. It is the beginning of a constitution by which the government is brought into direct touch with representatives of the people having the right to voice public grievances and make representations on matters of public concern, so that the influence of public opinion is brought to bear on executive measures. The basis of government is thus widened, even if there is no actual control over the administration. Up to the present responsible government as understood in the West has not been introduced except partially in the small State of Cochin. Here an Act passed in 1938 recognized the principle of ministerial responsibility to a legislature having a majority of popularly elected members, but not over the whole field of administration, so that the system is really dyarchic.

There is a growing demand for the introduction of a system of responsible government similar to that in force in the provinces of British India. Ideas know no territorial boundaries, and the States, intermingled as they are with British India, have not been able to escape the effects of their environment. There is a ferment due to the political advance made by British India and the force of example. Indians from the States have taken an active part in the political life of British India in the past, and now there is a repercussion on the States. Political organizations have been formed on the Congress model, agitation is active, and a demand for a greater share in the government is being voiced with growing insistence. Pressure has also been brought to bear from without by the Congress party, which seems to be anxious to secure political conformity throughout India and to be ready to force its ideas on the States. It is announced that the backwardness of the States hinders national progress, that the integrity and unity of India are an essential part of the national programme, and that therefore the States must have the same measure of political freedom as the rest of India. They will, it is said, have to remain integral parts of India, having responsible government internally, but subject in major matters of common concern to the control of a democratic federal centre. Some go so far as to state that there can be no half-council, of which the members were all nominated, and the latter has been changed into a body with a non-official majority. The representative assembly was described as follows in 1899: 'It meets by order, it departs punctually, and, after no long delay, by order; it never votes, it listens and it asks questions; but it cannot vote a farthing, or pass a law, or in fact do anything but listen. The assembly has its merits, but it is not so powerful to act as the smallest municipal board in British India.' Sir William Lee Warner in *The British Empire Series*, vol. i (1899), p. 284.



way house between autocracy and responsible government; that, quite apart from the question whether a State is well governed or badly governed, the system of personal government is effete and radically bad. It is this view which was expressed in a resolution passed in 1939 by the All-India States People's Conference at Ludhiana, which asserted that

'the Indian States system is completely out-of-date, semi-feudal, and an obstruction to the progress and advancement of the people. Autocracy as embodied in the system has long ceased to exist in every part of the world, and the progress made by the rest of India demands the liquidation of the Indian State system. The close association of this system with British imperialism<sup>1</sup> involves a danger to all people of India, and in the interest of the whole of India it is urgently necessary to put an end to this association and to make vital changes in the system. These changes must necessarily be in the form of responsible government.'

Some of the Princes have so far responded to the demand as to liberalize in some measure the constitution of their States or to promise to do so by successive stages, and a process of political development seems to be setting in by which the system of autocracy will evolve into a form of constitutional monarchy.

In spite of the infiltration of western ideas and the contacts with outside forces, which are affecting all the States in greater or less degree, the atmosphere is still often medieval. Though there have been approximations or assimilations to the methods of government followed in British India, the system of government is in general animated by different ideals. Many States are remnants of old India, preserving continuity with a remote past and Indian both in form and spirit; in the Rajput States of Rajputana a form of polity has been maintained which dates back to the eleventh century. Rule is still largely personal, the Raja being the fountain-head of authority, legislative, judicial, and executive. It is the Prince who issues orders, and he is not bound to explain his reasons or justify his actions. Personal rule is no doubt becoming weaker as it is more and more modified by the rule of law, but the authority of the ruler has still as its basis the principle *Hoc volo, sic jubeo*. It is not, however, necessarily arbitrary or irresponsible. A Raja's rights and those of his subjects are determined by custom and tradition; there are religious and social obligations to be fulfilled, which may be as binding as the restraints of constitutional monarchy; in some Rajput States the ruler's power is so far

<sup>1</sup> The idea seems to be that the Princes support British rule and that the British support the rule of the Princes—a connexion expressed in the formula that there can be no independence for India while the Princes remain and no freedom from the Princes while the British remain. See R. Reynolds, *The White Salubs in India* (1938), p. 232.

limited by that of the clans and their chiefs that he is by no means absolute but only *primus inter pares*. The subjects have their own methods of resistance to aggression. Cases are known in which, when a new tax is imposed, a hundred villages or more will combine and refuse to plough their lands, for a year or longer, until the State authorities yield to the pressure of this form of passive resistance and repeal the obnoxious tax.

Another feature which specially distinguishes the State system from that in force in British India is the restricted range of the functions of the executive, which, in spite of westernizing reforms, has not superseded communal activities. The administrative organization is less elaborate, and local responsibility is more fully recognized. The traditional Indian village system still goes on, i.e. the villagers police themselves, tax themselves for communal purposes, and collect the taxes they assess; the village councils or *panchayats* continue to adjudicate in petty criminal and civil cases. Not all have maintained their vitality. In Patiala, for example, they had become almost defunct as the people resorted to the law-courts in preference to them. In order to revive them a scheme prepared by the Settlement Commissioner, Major Popham Young, was introduced in 1909, under which *panchayats* were constituted in each district and given authority to decide disputes about property and suits for the recovery of debts. In Mysore steps had to be taken to revive the village *panchayats*, of which nearly 12,000 have been constituted. Out of this number only fifteen levy optional taxes, but there is a system of weekly labour contributed for communal purposes. Some are so advanced that they have opened maternity homes, and over one hundred are provided with electric light.

Freedom from close governmental control is congenial to the Indian temperament, which is averse from an authoritarian system and regimentation. The less the peasant sees of government, the more he likes it, largely because in its dealings with him it is represented mainly by underlings, who, besides making requisitions for their personal gratification, demand public improvements of which he neither understands the need nor appreciates the value. It is on this account that when transfers of villages from a State to British territory are proposed, e.g. in order to readjust a boundary, State subjects have been known to object to the transfer on the ground that though they might have better laws, greater security, and perhaps lighter taxation in a British district, they would have too much inspection, control, and harassment by subordinate officials. It is only fair to add that the exact reverse has been, and is, more often experienced. Sir William Lee-Warner tells us that he had to do with several cases of proposed rectification of the British



frontier and that he could quote scores of villages asking to be transferred to British India but knew none of a village not protesting against transfer to a State.<sup>1</sup> One other point should be noticed. The people of a State have the opportunity of personal access to the mainspring of power, i.e. the Raja himself, when he sits in Durbar and gives audience to all who desire to approach him. 'The Durbar is at once the refuge and remedy of the people, the rein and curb of the officials, and the *raison d'être* of the Raja.'<sup>2</sup> He is thus in touch with his subjects, and there is a feeling of attachment to him personally, which is not impaired if he adopts western habits of life.

The fact that there are still 562 States in existence, comprising over two-fifths of the area and containing nearly a quarter of the population of India, which administer their own laws and have their own systems of government, and that they include States which are patriarchal, quasi-feudal, and medieval in character, in addition to States which have kept in touch with modern western developments, is in itself proof of the general conservative trend of policy followed by the suzerain power. In British India the changes have naturally been far greater, but even there they have been evolutionary rather than revolutionary, and it may well be said that the British, like time itself, though they innovated greatly, innovated quietly and by degrees.

It has been observed that the Englishman is disposed to consider popular rights as the special privilege of the race to which he belongs and to repel rather than encourage the alien proselyte who aspires to a share of his privileges.<sup>3</sup> Circumstances, it is argued, alter cases, and political principles do not hold good in all places and at all times. Certainly the political advance during the nineteenth century was so gradual and slow that with each step forward Indian politicians complained that it had come too late to satisfy the demand for progress. During the present century the pace has been quickened. In 1908 both the British government and the Government of India repudiated any intention or desire to attempt the transplantation to India of any European form of representative government; but, as already stated, this was accepted in 1917 as the goal to be aimed at, and twenty years later a reformed constitution with a stronger admixture of democratic ideas was introduced. The British in all good faith believed that in the interests of the people of India with their different communities and different levels of political intelligence advance should proceed gradually,

<sup>1</sup> *The British Empire Series: India, Ceylon, Straits Settlements, &c.* (1899), vol. i, p. 289.

<sup>2</sup> Sir W. Lawrence, *The India we served* (1928), p. 180.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Macaulay in essay on Mirabeau.

but its attitude was strongly attacked by the nationalists, who objected that the pace was too slow and complained that the concessions granted were meagre and grudgingly given. However that may be, it may be pointed out that gradual advance is suited to the Indian temperament,<sup>1</sup> and India, advancing step by step, has at any rate escaped the débâcle of China with the chaos and havoc caused by the break-up of an old society and form of government.

Of the many changes produced by the system of government and administration, one of the most remarkable is the unification of the country. The concentration of power in a single authority, its even pressure on all classes, the subjection to a single system, the uniformity and precision of that system, the operation of an equalizing law, the movements of population facilitated by ordered rule as well as by modern means of transport—all have contributed to assimilation, though it must be remembered that whereas British India has been welded together into a governmental unity, the Indian States have remained a mass of disconnected units, each under its own ruler and having no common norm.

Another remarkable development has been the transformation of the concept of the nature of government in British India. The authority of previous governments had been based, in the main, on the power of the sword and the strength derived from the revenues which they raised. The Mughal empire had been a huge machine worked by a governing class entirely uncontrolled by public opinion. On its downfall might was right. Rulers were viewed by their subjects simply as the embodiment of power, as may be seen from an account given in 1838 by the Rev. W. Adam, a non-official who was deputed by Lord William Bentinck to inquire into the extent and efficiency of the indigenous system of education in Bengal and Bihar. Though he had had twenty years' experience of India, both as a missionary and as a newspaper editor, he was surprised to find, when he went into the villages, that his requests for information about schools and teachers were treated not as requests which could be granted or refused at will, but as orders which it would be folly or madness to thwart or resist. The people simply could not understand any language but that of command proceeding from government or conceive of any other relation but that of unhesitating obedience. They had been so

<sup>1</sup> An Indian exposition of this temperament is contained in some remarks made in 1888 by Sir Salar Jung (Prime Minister of Hyderabad from 1884 to 1887), with reference to the Congress movement, which was then in its infancy: 'The nature of the Indians, and, for the matter of that, of most Oriental people, is averse to sudden and violent changes of any kind. What they have contentedly lived under for years, to that they will persistently adhere. They had a settled, and to some extent a natural and wholesome, repugnance to the unsuitable, the unknown, and the untried.'



dragooned that all idea of resistance was lost. Submission to authority was the confirmed habit of the people. Except in matters affecting religion there was a general submissiveness to every person or thing bearing the form or semblance of public authority. So completely were they depressed by ages of oppressive rule that Adam came to the conclusion that they had lost not only the capacity and the desire, but the very idea, of self-government in matters coming either directly or indirectly within the sphere of State action. They had no idea of government as the organ of law and its sanctions, but viewed it simply as an instrument of power whose behests were absolute, indisputable, and wholly independent of the voluntary co-operation of the individual members of the community. 'We have thus a government which desires to rule by law and a people that wills to be ruled by power.'<sup>1</sup>

In place of this conception the government in British India has come to be recognized as the organ of law, and this principle is enforced by independent courts of justice. It is no longer thought that the people have no concern with the laws except to obey them or that government is made solely for a governing class or for a dominant minority to whose dictates the majority must humbly submit. Liberties of individuals and communities, freedom of speech, and the right of assembly have been secured. The right of the individual to invoke the law even against the State itself has been established. His right to be consulted in the government of the country has long been conceded, and with the institution of a system of responsible government in the provinces the conception of government as the expression of the common will has dawned, if it has not yet passed into the full light of day. The government is at any rate no longer looked upon as merely the embodiment of power; sometimes it seems as if it were regarded as a body which can be defied, dictated to, and coerced.

The *Pax Britannica* effected a revolution in the state of society. Lawlessness was eliminated and respect for the authority of the judiciary engendered. Law became more and more the basis of civilization. Higher standards of judicial purity and of probity in the conduct of public affairs were set up, with far-reaching ethical consequences. Government service, by establishing traditions of integrity, became a moral force. It took a long time to establish high principles among the Indian judicial and administrative personnel. Sir Richard Temple noticed in *Men and Events of My Time* (1882) that in the early years of his service honesty among the upper classes of Indian officials, especially in the judicial department, was the exception, whereas twenty years later

<sup>1</sup> J. Long, *Adam's Report on Vernacular Education in Bengal and Behar* (1868), pp. 252-4.

it was the rule and dishonesty the exception. Misconduct was still common in the lower grades but a sense of rectitude was general in the upper grades.

'Such men are now regarded as gentlemen in the best sense of the term, that is, as men of honour. Their character is not impugned, their rectitude is trusted by public opinion, corruption on their part is not suspected. In this description, as in all general descriptions, there must be reservations and exceptions, but such is the tone pervading those bright parts of the picture. Of the numerous changes which have of late years arisen in India, this particular change is the most noteworthy.'

Indian opinion ascribed the change to two causes. The first was the organization of the public services, offering scope for capacity, if accompanied by integrity and trustworthiness. The other and higher cause was the influence of western education, the moral lessons of European culture, the ideas of duty it infused, the virtuous principles it instilled, and personal association with Europeans. It must not be supposed that corruption has entirely disappeared; one provincial government at least has been obliged to take special measures to counteract it;<sup>2</sup> but though venality is common among subordinates in the lower grades of the public services, it is rare among those who hold responsible positions in the higher grades.

British administration in India has been the first great experiment of introducing modern western ideas of government in an eastern country, and its effects have been particularly far-reaching because of the extensive range of governmental functions. Their range is in many ways wider than in European states. *In primis* the land revenue administration determines the nature of the agrarian system, and, by defining and registering landed rights at each successive settlement, directly affects the whole agricultural population. Government itself owns large estates, and it frequently assumes the management of others in case of the minority or incapacity of their owners. It owns the bulk of the railways and manages a number of them. It is responsible for irrigation systems on which the agricultural life of large areas depends. Its forests account for nearly one-eighth of the total area of British India. It has founded, maintains, and staffs colleges and schools, which are expected to be a model to others. There are government hospitals and a State medical service. Even broadcasting is in the hands of

<sup>1</sup> *India in 1880* (1881), p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> In April 1939 the Government of Bombay announced that anti-corruption committees were to be established in every district of the province. They were to be composed of official and non-official members, of whom the former were required to 'initiate and control anti-corruption activities in their establishments' and the latter to educate public opinion by creating 'an anti-corruption mentality' amongst the public, as well as by bringing cases of corruption to the notice of the government.



government. It is not surprising that the people should get into the habit of looking to government for help and direction or that its forms and institutions should have made a deep impression on them. During the Mutiny the rebel government which was set up, under the descendant of the Mughals, in Delhi and its neighbourhood adopted English terms and methods of business, and there was no going back to Persian, the former language of the imperial court and of judicial proceedings. Sovereignty was nominally vested in the King of Delhi, but the real authority was a council bearing the English name of 'the Court', of which the dominant member was the 'Sekuter', i.e. the Secretary, who, it was observed, seemed to be the most important personage in Delhi. Among the papers found after the capture of the city was a memorial presented to the King by a sepoy colonel containing suggestions for the future government of the country, in which it was remarked that there was no doubt that, with all the faults of the English, their government was the best which Hindustan had ever seen. Its author accordingly proposed that the future administration should be based on the model they had set up, and supported his proposal by practical suggestions of detail.<sup>1</sup> A Raja near Mathura, who set up his rule over a number of villages, adopted *en bloc* a number of the governmental institutions, appointing a Supreme Court of Judicature, a Board of Revenue, a Commissioner, a Magistrate, and a Superintendent of Police. Though, however, the form of government in this petty domain was British, it was oriental in practice, for in the mornings the Raja held a Durbar in the village school-room, at which he heard complaints, received petitions, and passed orders, and he spent the remainder of the day plundering the local money-lenders.<sup>2</sup> The forms of British government have exercised the same attraction at later dates and in less troubled times, as, for instance, in 1893, when an attempt was made, in connexion with an agitation against the slaughter of cows, to set up in some areas of the United Provinces a kind of administration parallel to and independent of the lawfully constituted system, and local officers were appointed whose jurisdiction and designations corresponded to those of British officials.

#### THE RULE OF LAW

It is a commonplace of books on India that the rule of law in that country is a creation of the British, who have substituted government by law for government by discretion. "There is", wrote Sir Thomas Munro in 1798, 'no law in India but the will of

<sup>1</sup> Sir G. Campbell, *Memoirs of my Indian Career* (1893), vol. ii, pp. 356-7.

<sup>2</sup> M. Thornhill, *The Personal Experiences of a Magistrate during the Rise, Progress, and Suppression of the Indian Mutiny* (1884), p. 306.

the sovereign',<sup>1</sup> and his statement has been frequently repeated in different forms. In point of fact pre-British India was by no means without law and legal institutions. There were recognized systems of law, but the courts which administered them had to a great extent ceased to function in the 'red ruin and the breaking up of laws' which ensued on the disintegration of the Mughal empire. Law was no longer the framework of social order. Feuds and disputes were settled by the arbitrary will of anyone strong enough to assume and exercise authority.

Even when the courts of law were in effective operation, the majority of cases, other than those of a grave nature, were decided not by them but by *panchayats* or village courts, which were more like courts of arbitration aiming at the settlement of disputes by mutual agreement rather than by precise adjudication. In them custom largely took the form of law, for they administered no definite system of law but were guided by customs having no uniformity but changing from place to place. They dispensed substantial justice owing to their local knowledge and familiarity with the ways of life of parties and witnesses; but the uncertain directions of varying village customs cannot be regarded as an effective substitute for the precise rules of a body of systematized law. The legal systems were, moreover, so limited in their scope that, as stated in a minute recorded by Sir Henry Maine in 1869, India was, regard being had to its moral and material needs, a country singularly empty of law. There was no comprehensive code of civil rights. Both the Hindu and Islamic systems of law were systems of personal or family law. They dealt mainly with such matters as marriage and succession to property; they were intended to regulate only the relations *inter se* of the members of each community; neither contemplated the adjudication of disputes between the adherents of different religions. Both had their origin in a primitive form of society and made no provision for the needs of a more advanced civilization. The Islamic law of contract, for example, was practically confined to the barter and immediate sale of goods. Such things as bills of exchange were beyond its purview; there was in fact no law of contract suited to modern conditions. What is perhaps more extraordinary, the law was singularly silent on the question of landed rights; and neither civil nor criminal jurisprudence contained a law of evidence or a law of procedure.

Law, it has been said, is the gospel of the Englishman, and one of the first steps taken on the establishment of British rule was the organization of law courts in all districts; but there was no attempt to introduce English law except in the Presidency towns, i.e.

<sup>1</sup> G. R. Gleig, *Life of Major-General Sir Thomas Munro* (1830), p. 203.



Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, and even there the Hindu and Muslim family law was maintained. The principle laid down by Warren Hastings was that a perfect system of jurisprudence was not to be expected and that if the existing system did not injuriously affect the authority of government or the interests of society, and was consonant to the ideas, manners, and inclinations of the people, it would on that account be preferable to any which even a superior wisdom could substitute for it. The personal law of the Hindus was, he said, a proof that the people of the country did not require the aid of the British to furnish them with a rule for their conduct. The Islamic penal law was 'founded on the most lenient principle and abhorrence of bloodshed', capital punishment being rarely inflicted for theft and robbery except of a heinous and dangerous nature. It was far less severe than the English law of the time, which allowed of the death penalty for over 150 offences and has been called 'a mere sanguinary chaos'. What were the results?

"There are not many instances of robbery in India, scarcely any of murder. A traveller may pass through a whole province unarmed and sleep in security in the open plain. He will have no enemies to dread but the wild beasts. Such being the laws by which the people of Bengal have been always governed and such their effects, there can be no great objection to their continuance, but there may be a great degree of injustice in making men liable at once to punishments with which they have been unacquainted, and which their customs and manners have not taught them to associate with their idea of offence."

It can scarcely be doubted that Warren Hastings's estimate of the peaceful and law-abiding nature of the country was too favourable.<sup>2</sup> It can also be questioned whether he did not turn a blind eye to the defects of Islamic law, such as the provision that the evidence of non-Muslims was inadmissible against Muslims, a rule which made it impossible to hold the scales of justice evenly in cases between Hindus and Muslims. He soon found that there were other anomalies which could not be countenanced. 'The sons or next of kin, for instance, were free to pardon the murderers of parents or kinsmen—a practice which, as he himself observed, would, if rigidly observed, put the life of every parent in the hands of his son. Children or the nearest of kin to a murdered man were

<sup>1</sup> See M. E. Monckton Jones, *Warren Hastings in Bengal 1772-1774* (1918), pp. 187-8, 331, 337-8.

<sup>2</sup> Warren Hastings himself was forced to take drastic action against dacoits, whom he described as robbers by profession and even by birth, a race of outlaws who lived from father to son in a state of warfare against society, plundering and burning villages and murdering their inhabitants. 'There are various old proverbs which attest the lawlessness of different classes and different parts of North India, e.g. 'If there were no Rangoons, Gujars, dogs, or cats we could sleep with our doors open'; or again, 'Don't go to Bhojpur; if you do go there, don't eat; if you should eat, don't go to sleep.'

enjoined to execute the sentence passed on the guilty,<sup>1</sup> and a case came before him in which a mother was condemned to perish by the hands of her children for the murder of her husband. A murderer again escaped the death sentence if he did not use an 'instrument formed for shedding blood', so that a man who killed a girl for the sake of her silver ornaments by holding her head under water till life was extinct was punished no more severely than if he had merely robbed her, being only condemned to pay 'the price of blood', which seems to have been fixed at Rs. 3,333. 5a. 4p.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of its defects the Islamic penal law was maintained and administered, though not in its entirety, for inequitable and archaic provisions were discarded and the rigour of its punishments mitigated—a reform which took some time to effect, for there are records of dacoits being impaled or having a hand or a foot cut off.<sup>3</sup> A different system of penal law was followed in Bombay in territories which had been subject to the Marathas. There the Hindu criminal law was nominally the law of the land, but it was practically disused and unknown to the bulk of the people, its place being taken by customs which derived their authority from no written text. To reintroduce it would have been an innovation, and it was considered preferable to frame a penal code for Bombay based on English law, which was of course just as much an innovation. In the administration of civil justice, there and elsewhere, the courts followed the Hindu and Muslim family laws so far as they were applicable and in matters not covered by any recognized law or rule were simply required to judge according to equity and good conscience. This system, or rather want of system, under which there was triune law, English, Muslim and Hindu, continued until 1859, when codification began. Till then the judicial law undoubtedly left much to be desired, and Macaulay, speaking in the House of Commons in 1833, declared that what was administered was not law but a kind of rude and capricious equity. In one and the same cause the process and pleadings were in the fashion of one nation, the judgement was according to the laws of another. An issue was evolved according to the rules of Westminster, and it was decided according to those of Benares. Three years later, however, when, as Law Member of Council, he had had actual experience of its working, he expressed the

<sup>1</sup> Under Muslim law a murderer may be handed over for execution to the relatives of the murdered man as 'the avengers of blood'. This practice is still in force in the State of Hyderabad.

<sup>2</sup> M. E. Monckton Jones, *Warren Hastings in Bengal, 1772-74* (1918), pp. 333-4.

<sup>3</sup> An instance of such a punishment was reported in the *Calcutta Chronicle* in 1789. Fourteen dacoits were found guilty, and each man had his right hand and left foot cut off at the joint. This form of punishment was abolished in 1791, when a penalty of seven years' imprisonment was substituted for the loss of one limb and fourteen years' for the loss of two.



opinion that, considered as a temporary substitute for a body of well-defined law, it was as unexceptionable a system as could be devised.<sup>1</sup>

In 1833 a Committee of Parliament which held an inquiry into the administration of the East India Company came to the conclusion that the principles of British law could never be made the basis of an Indian code, though the law of India might beneficially be assimilated to British law in certain points. Such assimilation went on without any legislative enactment. When questions were raised for the settlement of which Indian law afforded no guidance, the judiciary naturally turned to the principles and provisions of English law, which was the only model available. Naturally also English forms of procedure were adopted, and the English law of evidence was applied, with the result that a great part of the law administered by the courts became English law in one form or another. This, as Sir Henry Maine has pointed out, was nothing less than a revolution, which, little as it was intended or perceived, was quite inevitable in the absence of legislation.<sup>2</sup> When eventually comprehensive legislation was undertaken, the anglicizing tendency was accentuated by codes embodying the principles and provisions of English law. Codification actually began in the Punjab, where, after its annexation in 1846, Lord Lawrence and his officers drew up a Penal Code, Codes of Criminal and Civil Procedure, and a code which is said to have been not unlike the French *Code Civile* in scope. These, however, were improvisations which cannot be compared with the finished codes produced by jurists. Of the latter by far the greatest was the Indian Penal Code, which was adapted to Indian conditions,<sup>3</sup> and did not merely reproduce, but improved on, the English law, which has been described as 'that codeless myriad of precedents, that wilderness of single instances'. It certainly drew on other sources; Macaulay himself acknowledged its indebtedness to the French Code of 1809 and even more to the Code of Louisiana. Other and later measures were more English in their spirit and contents, as their titles indicate, such as the Limitation Act, the Easements Act, &c.

As the machinery of government became more westernized and the

<sup>1</sup> *Calcutta Review* (1907), p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> *Village Communities in the East and West* (1876), p. 299.

<sup>3</sup> For instance, adultery in England is only a civil offence but in deference to the popular feeling in India that a man who seduces a wife should not be let off with the payment of damages, adultery is a criminal offence under the Indian Penal Code, the man who commits adultery with a married woman being liable to imprisonment. This provision has been quoted as an instance of sympathetic consideration of the feelings of Indians and as earning the gratitude of millions. S. M. Mitra, *Indian Problems* (1908), p. 13. On the other hand, the code does not provide for the punishment of an adulterous wife, unlike Islamic law which penalizes adultery on the part of married persons of either sex, and does not allow an unchaste wife to get off scot free.

economic organization of the country more complex, there was a mass of legislation on English lines designed to provide a legal framework both for the administration and for a rapidly developing commercial and industrial civilization. There were, for example, Acts dealing with police, prisons and reformatory schools, excise and stamps, customs and tariffs; acts on the subject of copyright and patents, limited liability companies, and insurance; measures regulating the conditions of labour in mines and factories, &c. Numerous additions have been made in recent years in order to adjust the law to the changing phases of economic life and to modern conceptions of the State as the protector of labour, an added stimulus being given by the desire of the leaders of Indian thought that India should not be classed as a backward country at the International Labour Conference. There is consequently a substantial body of legislation dealing with such matters as trade unions, trade disputes, hours of labour, and workmen's compensation, for which English legislation has been the model. Law has, in short, become the cement of civilization to a degree unknown in pre-British India.

Only in a comparatively few cases did the British undertake legislation which was justified, or necessitated, by western standards, but which ran counter to Indian ideas and constituted a direct and positive interference with them. Some of the practices which it prohibited were essentially shocking or criminal. Suttee, which was made illegal in 1829, was simply suicide, though committed with a religious motive. Infanticide, against which Act VIII of 1870 was passed, was plain murder. Part of an Act passed next year (XXVII of 1871), relating to eunuchs, prevented the possession of boys for a shocking purpose. Other measures put into practice certain fundamental principles of the West. The Act (V of 1843) which, as stated in Chapter II, abolished slavery in an indirect and devious manner, was a measure dictated by western ideas of the inherent rights of man. The Caste Disabilities Removal Act (XXI of 1850) was intended to secure freedom of conscience, by providing that change of religion and loss of caste should not involve the penalty of forfeiture of rights of property and inheritance. This measure was strongly opposed, petitions against it being presented by 60,000 persons in Calcutta and the neighbourhood. It was followed by an Act (XV of 1856), legalizing the remarriage of Hindu widows, which, as Sir James Fitzjames Stephen remarks, was approved only by a small minority who had come under the influence of western ideas and was essentially a displacement of Hindu in favour of European morality.<sup>1</sup> This was the first of several measures on the subject of remarriage which contravened Indian ideas on the subject, but were manifestly right

<sup>1</sup> Sir W. W. Hunter, *Life of the Earl of Mayo* (1876), vol. ii, p. 195.



according to European ideas. The principle that a person should not suffer on account of change of faith was applied in the Converts Remarriage Act (XXI of 1886), which enabled converts to Christianity to obtain divorces from husbands or wives who repudiated them on that account. Act III of 1872 provided a form of marriage for persons (such as the members of the Brahmo Samaj) who were not Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Jews, or Christians; it was in substance an Act legalizing civil marriages for persons who had abandoned the rites of orthodox Hinduism, and was due to the fact that the marriages of members of the Brahmo Samaj might be invalidated in English courts of law if they were not performed with the customary Hindu ceremonies to which they were conscientious objectors. Child marriage was dealt with indirectly by measures relating to the age of consent which were passed in 1891 and 1925. It was not till 1929 that the evil was attacked directly by an Act prohibiting and penalizing marriage below certain ages (14 years for females and 18 years for males), and this was not a government but a private measure.

The aim of jurisprudence in India should, according to Macaulay, be uniformity where you can have it, diversity where you must have it, but in all cases certainty. Uniformity and certainty have been attained in the domain of English law with its codes and Acts. The necessity for diversity is recognized by the coexistence of the Islamic and Hindu systems of domestic law, which the courts are bound to observe except so far as they have been altered or abolished by legislative enactments. Actually there has been little change in them. In the case of Islamic law alterations and additions are precluded by the belief of orthodox Muslims that legislation is not within the province of an earthly sovereign, but belongs to God alone. There has also been little interference with Hindu law on account of the Hindu belief that it is a divine institution with which a secular state has no concern beyond the duty of administering it. It remains therefore substantially the same in spite of its uncertainty, for it is a mixture of law, religion, and morality, and sanctity is not combined with clarity or priestly precepts with precision. It has, however, been modified by judicial interpretation. The courts have held that certain rules of Hindu law have become obsolete. In other cases they have held that particular injunctions are only recommendations and not mandatory commands, or that certain rules are moral precepts and not legal provisions of an imperative nature. It has further been modified by usage. That ancient authority, the Laws of Manu, laid down that custom is transcendent law, and this maxim has been confirmed by a ruling of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council that clear proof of usage should outweigh the text of Hindu law. It has also been

modified to a slight extent by legislation, much of it recent in date and piecemeal in character, which, by introducing innovations of western origin, has caused considerable confusion, e.g. the Gains of Learning Act (affecting the property of the joint-family), the Hindu Law of Inheritance (Amendment) Act (altering the order in which certain heirs of a man dying intestate may succeed to his property), and the Hindu Women's Rights to Property Act (confering certain rights on women). Further legislation affecting the status of women is proposed, and bills to admit of divorce and to prevent polygamous marriages have already been brought forward in different legislatures.

The Muslims show no inclination to amend their personal law as the Hindus have. A certain number hold that it should be reformed or adjusted to liberal principles, particularly as regards divorce, arguing that the spirit of Islamic law will not be violated if it is altered so as to allow, for instance, wives to divorce their husbands on grounds of cruelty and desertion; but this is not the view of the majority. Hindus, they say, may rewrite their *Sastras* but the Koran is the final word of God, and it is not for a Musalman to add to or alter it, or to create sanctions in conflict with its injunctions. In their ardour for westernization and secularization, the Muslims of Turkey have not scrupled to reform their law and have introduced a civil code based on the Swiss model in place of the Muslim religious law, but the Indian Muslims cling to the *Shariat* or canon law as an integral part of their religion.

So far from being either modified or restricted in scope, its range has been extended in recent years by legislative enactments, under which it is to supersede the customary law hitherto in force. Here some explanation is necessary. There are certain communities descended from ancestors who were converted from Hinduism to Islam, but who did not adopt the Islamic law when they accepted the Islamic faith. Their descendants have for centuries continued to observe the rules of Hindu law in matters of inheritance and succession. There are also village communities, notably in the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province, which follow customary law, largely tribal in origin. In a great part of India the British gave legal validity to customary law, whether Hindu or tribal in origin, and it was preserved, and given stability, by executive action as well as by judicial decisions. In the United Provinces the courts held until 1913 that the Civil Court Acts, which did not provide for effect being given to custom or special usage, precluded them from recognizing any custom at variance with Islamic law; in 1913, however, the practice changed owing to a contrary ruling being given by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. Elsewhere custom was allowed to modify law. In



Madras it had the force of law even when it conflicted with the rules of the *Shariat*. In Bombay it was specifically provided in a Regulation of 1827 that cases should be decided first by the substantive law contained in Regulations and Acts, failing that by the usages of the country, and failing the latter by the personal law of a defendant. In the Punjab from the first days of British rule the validity of custom was upheld in questions concerning succession, transfers of landed property, and family relations. The first code of civil law prevented the application of the rules of English, Muslim, and Hindu law, and when in 1872 it was superseded by the Punjab Laws Act, that measure laid down that proved custom should prevail over either Muslim or Hindu law, provided that it was not contrary to justice and had not been changed or abrogated by statutory law, or declared void by competent authority. Not only had the code provided for custom having precedence over law, but the effect of land revenue settlements recording landed rights and village usages had been to give the customs of the country a stability they had not had before. The position was briefly, as stated in a Privy Council judgement of 1906, that it was clearly recognized by the framers of the Act that there were tracts in the Punjab where one would expect to find law modified by custom rather than custom modified by law and that it might truly be said of certain parts of it that there was not an agriculturist, whether Hindu or Musalman, who was really governed by pure Hindu or Muslim law.

The position has recently been changed so far as Muslims are concerned; among Hindus, as already stated, custom may override law. For a variety of reasons, political and non-political, there has been a reaction against the system in force. Orthodox Muslims could not look with indifference on a situation in which their co-religionists might observe any but the sacred law. There was a feeling that the latter had been set aside by man-made laws and by non-Muslim courts and that it should be restored to its proper place. In Islam there should be one law as there is one faith. Both are contained in the same divine revelation, the Koran, and both are obligatory. The fear of Hindu domination also created a desire for greater solidarity. Islam should present a united front, and Muslims who observed other rules should fall into line with their co-religionists. Lastly it was felt that in regard to the rights of women the Islamic law is more enlightened and liberal than Hindu or customary tribal law, as it gives a right of succession to widows, daughters, and others which the latter do not. The outcome has been a substantial change of the law. The principle and practice observed by the British have been abandoned. In 1935 an Act was passed for the North-West Frontier Province by which the *Shariat*

is to be observed instead of customary law, and two years later an all-India Act, the Muslim Personal Law (*Shariat*) Act, was added to the statute book. The latter Act does not apply to agricultural land but is otherwise extensive in range; and, as Sir George Rankin observes, it represents a movement of public sentiment which must profoundly affect northern India at least and will prevent the introduction of new principles in the *lex loci* and tend to preserve the characteristic features of Muslim society.<sup>1</sup>

There is also a certain amount of domestic law for special communities such as the Hindus of Malabar, who observe a matrilinear system and have special forms of marriage, and the Parsis, whose family relations are governed by special Acts, e.g. the Parsis Chattels Real Act of 1837, which regulates inheritance of immovable property, the Parsi Succession Act of 1865, and the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act of the same year. The legal system is therefore marked by extreme diversity, English, Hindu, Islamic, Parsi, customary, and tribal law all being recognized. The courts have to decide cases to which, it may be, idols and their representatives are parties; rules believed to be of divine and not secular origin and authority have to be applied; customs which originated in a more primitive form of society have to be ascertained. In other cases laws based on the most refined principles of European jurisprudence and suited to the complex conditions of modern life have to be followed. The validity of customs which are embodied in no written text, and for which the authority is immemorial tradition and current usage, is recognized as well as of systems of law of which different languages are the medium—the dead language of Sanskrit, the live but foreign language of Arabic, the equally foreign language of English, not to mention the various current languages of India into which they are translated. This variety of laws and languages is typical of the civilization of India with its many elements, Hindu, Islamic, and English, so modern and yet so ancient that there are survivals of tribal life dating back to a time of which there is no recorded history.

The first reaction of the people to English law as administered by the Supreme Court in Calcutta was one of bewilderment and of alarm at its powers, especially the power of summary arrest. Readers of Macaulay's essay on Warren Hastings will remember his vivid account of the reign of terror, terror heightened by mystery, which it created. No Maratha invasion, he declared, ever spread such dismay as the inroad of English lawyers; all the injustice of former oppressors, Asiatic and European, appeared as a

<sup>1</sup> *Custom and the Muslim Law in British India* (address delivered to the British Grotius Society on 21 June 1939). I desire to acknowledge my indebtedness to this paper.



blessing when compared with the justice of the Supreme Court. This is the language of exaggeration, but it has a substratum of truth. It was some time before the feeling of apprehension gave way to one of confidence in the certainty of its justice. It was not criminal justice but the administration of civil justice, with its strange principles and forms of procedure, that was feared, and fear was not confined to Calcutta. In the Deccan one reason why Elphinstone continued the *panchayat* system was that the people dreaded the civil courts. In the north-west of India the same feeling is indicated by a story which tells how the inhabitants of a rural area fled *en masse* when it was first conquered by the British at the beginning of the nineteenth century. When asked whether they were fleeing from Lord Lake's army, they replied, 'No, the *Adalat* (civil court) is coming.' The explanation is partly that in the early days of British rule the settlement of questions relating to landed rights was left to the civil courts, from which the cultivators, having no leases or documentary evidence of their rights but only the sanction of unwritten custom, were unable to obtain justice. It is partly due to the fact that English law allowed of expropriation of landholders for arrears of debts due to money-lenders, whereas in pre-British India the land, the immediate jewel of the peasant's soul, was beyond the usurer's reach.

In North India at least the distrust of the system of civil justice continued till the end of the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1850 Sir William Sleeman found that Brahman communities who had resided for a time in a British district preferred living in Oudh, which was still independent territory, in spite of their exposure to violence and exaction in the latter. Their explanation was: 'We cannot understand the *ain* and *kanun* (i.e. laws and regulations), nor should we ever do so. Your courts of justice are the things we most dread, and we are glad to escape from them as soon as we can.'<sup>1</sup> Stronger language was used by an English official serving in the North-Western Provinces, who pointed out that the legal system administered by the British contained three elements, English justice, English common sense, and English law, of which the last was as bad as the first two were good.

'What European firewater has been physically to the Red Indian, European law has been morally to the Indians of the East. Millions of simple men, alike in the lower and upper provinces,<sup>2</sup> curse the day when they or their fathers first tasted English law, so far as it is developed in our civil jurisprudence; under its forms and delays thousands of village communities, which neither force nor famine could disperse, have crumbled into dust.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *A Journey through the Kingdom of Oudh* (1858), vol. ii, pp. 65-6.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. Bengal, Bihar, and the North-Western (now the United) Provinces.

<sup>3</sup> C. Raikes, *Notes on the North-Western Provinces of India* (1852), pp. 204-5.

On the other hand, notwithstanding the strangeness of the western system of law which they administered, there seems to have been a predilection for the courts in some newly annexed territories. Thus, in the cis-Sutlej States of the Punjab, when British administration was first introduced, Sir George Campbell found that the people carried their energies into the courts as thoroughly as any Scotsman 'anxious to "ding" his neighbours by process of law'.<sup>1</sup> The number of cases in proportion to the population was double that of older provinces—a striking proof of the dictum that when a country has been misgoverned, courts of justice have an immense ascendancy over men's minds and a singular attraction for them when they are first presented as a means of settling disputes.

Their popularity has increased with the passage of years, the people freely invoking their help for the maintenance of rights and the redress of wrongs, as well as for the satisfaction of grudges and the confusion of personal enemies. It seems as if they find in legal proceedings the same thrill of excitement that was formerly obtained by an appeal to physical force as a means of settling disputes and carrying on feuds. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that they have taken to law as less civilized nations take to drink when first brought into contact with western civilization, and though it would be unfair to say that litigation is a national sport, there can be no doubt that the love of law often degenerates into litigiousness. There is an addiction to litigation so intense that it is pursued in spite of the ruin it may, and sometimes does, entail, and litigiousness is fostered by what Dr. Johnson called the 'fell attorney' who 'prowls for prey'. Cases are known of suits arising out of football matches; to mention one, a football club which was taking part in a tournament in 1938 filed a suit in the civil court in order to get a ruling that a goal which had been given against it in a match was null and void, and obtained an *ad interim* injunction suspending the tournament *pendente lite*. Litigiousness attracted attention over a century ago, when it was thought to be a national trait, due simply to the litigious spirit of the people. This imputation on them was, however, vigorously denied by Sir Thomas Munro, who pointed out that there had been little litigation when cases were decided by *panchayats*. 'Had this been their real character, it would have appeared when they paid nothing for trials. . . . Our system produces the litigation which we groundlessly impute to the character of the people.'

There is one notable exception to the general popularity of the law courts. They are as a rule disliked by the backward races, which, being still in a somewhat primitive stage of civilization, are

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of My Indian Career* (1893), vol. i, p. 184.



incapable of understanding the procedure and forms of law which are administered, and cannot hold their own in them against more subtle and experienced Hindus and Muslims. They are baffled by what Bacon calls nimble and sinister tricks, by which the plain and direct courses of the law are perverted, so that judgement is turned into wormwood and injustice makes it bitter. Regarding the law courts as places where the law is generally enforced against them and rarely in their favour, they avoid them. When they do appear in them, it is usually as the sued and not as suitors. This generalization, however, is subject to exceptions. Some aborigines are known to prefer the law courts to the jurisdiction of their headmen and would rather have their disputes settled by legal process than in the traditional tribal manner.

Among the general population, however, the judicial system is appreciated on account of its impartial justice. 'Black is their faith,' said a Musalman, 'but pure and blameless is their justice.' Congress politicians, while inveighing against the British government and all its ways and works, would say of the Englishman, as the schoolboy said of Dr. Arnold, that he is a beast but a just beast. It is a common cliché that the High Court is the palladium of liberty; it is one of the most popular institutions in India. In his denunciation of British rule and its evils, Mr. Gandhi makes an exception of the High Courts, which, he says, are the one institution which the British built up with patient care. He has even proposed that, in order to secure strict impartiality and uniformity of practice, appeals should lie from the law courts of the States to the High Courts of British India.<sup>1</sup>

The judicial system, however, is by no means immune from criticism. As in other countries, there are complaints of the costliness and maddening delays of the law. The complaints on the latter head are not without foundation. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council has frequently had occasion to animadvert on the extreme dilatoriness of suits and trials. There is also a certain amount of latent dissatisfaction with the inexorability of its operation. On the one hand, there is a predilection for personal access to rulers of greater flexibility, who can be persuaded to make exceptions to rules and to show mercy as well as justice. On the other hand, there is still a lingering feeling of impatience with some of the restraints imposed by law which prevent a man from exercising what he and his caste or tribe consider legitimate rights or positive duties, and which, by making legal crimes of what are not thought to be moral offences, clash with traditional ideas of what is right and proper, as, for instance, cutting off the nose of an unfaithful wife, taking vengeance on her seducer, marrying

<sup>1</sup> *The Harijan* of 15 July 1939.

a daughter below the age of puberty in the case of Hindus, and killing witches in the case of primitive tribes.

It has been claimed that the courts of justice have been the most powerful and beneficial of the agencies introduced into India by British rule owing to the establishment of the principle of equality, by which the poorest and meanest have been placed on the same level as the richest and most powerful, the protection they have given to the weak against the strong, and the creation of a consciousness of positive rights recognized by law and capable of being enforced. On the first institution of a judicial system two of the chief difficulties which presented themselves were the general ignorance of the people and the want of sufficient spirit to make a stand against oppression. The law was regarded as for the most part the arbitrary will of the judge; the requisitions, prohibitions, and sanctions of the law were unknown to the great body of the people. Their supine submissiveness frustrated the efforts of legislators. Nothing is more noticeable and more deplorable in the records of the first half-century of British rule than their acquiescence in oppression and wrong-doing. In Bombay Mountstuart Elphinstone was regretfully forced to the conclusion that laws were vain when no one could be found with sufficient spirit to take advantage of those enacted in their favour.<sup>1</sup> In Madras Sir Thomas Munro pointed out that conditions in India, where the people meekly submitted to oppression, were very different from those of England, where the people resisted it and so implemented the law.

'We make laws for them as if they are Englishmen and are surprised that they should have no operation. . . . We suppose that our laws are founded on just principles and that they must therefore have the same beneficial operation as at home; but we forget that the one first great principle, the freedom of the people, does not exist here. Our institutions here, not resting on the same foundation as those of a free people, cannot be made to act in the same way. We cannot make the inanimate corpse perform the same functions as the living body.'

It was useless to caution the people against meekly complying with illegal exactions by telling them that the law was on their side and would support them in refusing to pay unauthorized demands. Warnings and exhortations were thrown away; after listening to them, they would with few exceptions submit the very next day as quietly as before. Special laws were therefore required; the local officers of government had to be vested with special powers for their protection, and it was necessary that they should not wait for complaints to come in but go round the villages and seek for them.<sup>2</sup>

The government was regarded as something afar and apart,

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Cotton, *Mountstuart Elphinstone* (1892), p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> G. R. Gleig, *Life of Major-General Sir Thomas Munro* (1830), vol. i, p. 427; vol. iii, pp. 378-9.



against which the people had no rights. If, as occasionally happened, they were roused to opposition by measures which were regarded as oppressive and inequitable, opposition took the traditional form of passive resistance. Thus, when a house-tax was imposed at Benares, there was what is now called a *hartal*, of which Bishop Heber wrote a vivid account in 1824. Over 300,000 persons 'deserted their houses, shut up their shops, suspended the labour of their farms, forbore to light fires, dress victuals, many of them even to eat, and sat down with folded arms and drooping heads, like so many sheep, on the plains which surround Benares'.<sup>1</sup> A very different conception of the nature of government was gradually implanted. Measures were passed by which it was seen that government was bound as well as its subjects, and the subordination of its executive officers to the judiciary was enforced in practice. Discretionary administration, which was long the rule in newly annexed and less settled territory, and which was inconsistent with the existence of regular courts requiring conformity to legal rules, gave way to government by law. The laws were no longer edicts or administrative rules of the executive power but the enactments of legislatures. Law became the basis of government, whose executive officers were required to have legal warrant for all their proceedings.

In addition to this, private citizens were able to exercise a right to sue government and its officers—a right dating back to 1789 when Lord Cornwallis introduced the un-English<sup>2</sup> rule that all its officers should be amenable to the courts of law for acts done in their official capacities, and that in cases connected with property a suit could lie against government itself. Nothing more contrary to the old conception of government as a power against which the people had no legal rights can be conceived than this provision, which has remained in force to the present time and has created a sense of private rights, the people being well aware of their right to sue government and ready to act on it.

'The means,' wrote Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, 'by which the poorest peasant in India can obtain against the Government of India a remedy for any wrong he may have sustained from it are far simpler, more clear, and more effective than the means by which the richest and most influential man in England can get a remedy against the government in England. . . . The liability of the government extends to each of its representatives personally. Less protection against suits for any

<sup>1</sup> *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India* (1849), vol. I, p. 185.

<sup>2</sup> In England a private citizen cannot sue the Crown; he can proceed against it only by petition of right and only in regard to lands or goods claimed from the Crown and cases of alleged breach of contract by it. The Indian is therefore in a better position than the Englishman as regards remedies against the Crown.

wrongful proceedings is given to District Officers in India than would be given to magistrates and judges in England.<sup>1</sup>

A sense of individual rights has also been generated owing to the influence of English legal thought and practice, which treats the individual as a unit and recognizes individual rather than collective responsibility. The spirit of individualism, to which other factors have also contributed, has already done much to modify the organization of a society of which the group rather than the individual is the unit and in which a man's status is determined by the rights which belong to him as a member of a group.

Another consequence which is of considerable sociological importance has been the creation of a legal profession. Except in Portuguese territory there was no class of this kind in pre-British India, parties pleading personally in the courts or, if unable to attend, through their relatives. It came into existence with the establishment of courts of law which introduced the system of advocates and attorneys. Professional legal assistance was scarcely necessary under a system in which most cases were decided by village courts, of which the members had no expert knowledge, but decided simple issues in accordance with the customary law which was well understood by them and by the general public. Legal practitioners became a necessity when a foreign system of law was introduced and courts were established with technical rules of evidence and procedure which were caviare to the general. The profession was composed at first of Englishmen, but Indians showed remarkable aptitude for legal studies and took readily to the practice of the law. In 1868 an immense multiplication of Indian legal practitioners was noticed, and in course of time they monopolized the lower branches of the profession and acquired an increasingly large share of its higher branches, till English barristers were almost replaced by them. Their influence has increased with their numbers, so much so that the rule of law is popularly known as the rule of the lawyer (*Vakil ka raj*). It is this class which has taken the lead in public life and political movements, and not the great landholders and nobles, as had been hoped by early administrators. Its power is regarded by the lower classes as a strange and unwelcome phenomenon of a revolutionary age, and by the landlord class with the feeling natural to those who have lost the power which they considered their birthright.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. W. Hunter, *Life of the Earl of Mayo* (1870), vol. ii, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> The following remarks made by the Maharaja of Darbhanga, the greatest landlord in Bihar, to the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal may be quoted as typical: 'It is your policy that is to blame for the unwillingness of the zamindars to take their place and state their opinions publicly. You have thrown all the power into the hands of the pleaders. They rule the courts; they have all the power of the local bodies; and they have a practical monopoly of the Legislative



The aptitude for a western system of law which we have just noticed is also evident in those Indians who have had to administer it. A high judicial standard has been maintained, at least in the higher branches of the judiciary, whose depth and breadth of legal learning were acknowledged as long ago as 1883 by Lord Selborne. Speaking in the House of Lords, with all the authority of a former Lord Chancellor, he said that, as the result of a long experience of Indian cases in the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, he had no hesitation in affirming that in respect of integrity, learning, knowledge, and soundness, the judgements of Indian judges were quite as good as those of English judges.

The moral effects of the rule of law are among its intangible and imponderable, but invaluable, fruits, the people having become familiarized with the principle that the law should be the same for all, that it should secure to each man the rights to which he is entitled, and that it should be administered without fear or favour, and without distinction of rank, position, or caste. Formerly justice had been polluted by venality, though numerous instances could be cited of stern impartiality in the administration of Islamic law.<sup>1</sup> In territories under Hindu rule there does not seem to have been a universal system of law, i.e. there was not the same law for all persons and all classes but distinctions were made, and preferential treatment given, on the basis of status;<sup>2</sup> as shown in Chapter I, penalties were differentiated according to caste and position in the Maratha territories. Discriminations of this kind could not be continued under a western system of law, though some concessions were made at first. The early regulations regarding the judicial system which were issued by Warren Hastings in 1772 allowed for persons being exempted from corporal punishment by reason of rank, caste, or station, and being fined instead, for petty misdemeanours.<sup>3</sup> In the Deccan, privileges of rank and position were Councils. We cannot oppose them.' Sir A. H. L. Fraser, *Among Indian Rajahs and Ryots* (1911), p. 58.

<sup>1</sup> Murshid Ali Khan, Nawab of Bengal, for instance, sentenced his own son to execution and had a highly placed officer stoned to death. On the other hand, Pellaeert noticed that the laws were scarcely observed at all, but criminals were hurried away to execution with little ceremony if they were poor and unable to give bribes. See W. H. Moreland, *Jahangir's India* (1925), p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> In Nepal, which prides itself on maintaining Hindu traditions and practices, a judge of the supreme court remarked to Brian Houghton Hodgson that in British India the courts obliterated distinctions of caste, but 'here on the contrary all those distinctions are religiously observed by the public courts of justice, which punish according to caste and never take the life of a Brahman. Below the *Sastras* are things to talk of; here they are acted up to.' B. H. Hodgson, *Essays on Indian Subjects* (1880), vol. ii, p. 241.

<sup>3</sup> It is worth mentioning, as showing the consideration which Warren Hastings had for humble cultivators that the same regulation directed that they should not be summoned to court during the months of harvest except for urgent cases. M. E. Monckton Jones, *Warren Hastings in Bengal 1772-1774* (1918), pp. 313, 325, 326.

recognized in the early days of British administration by Elphinstone, who was anxious that it should be conducted on lines acceptable to the people. He accordingly exempted territorial magnates from the processes of civil courts and in criminal cases required a reference to be made to superior authority before they were prosecuted. The grant of such privileges was certainly popular, if we may judge from the statement of Sir John Malcolm that it was recognized by the lowest orders as a concession to those whom they deemed their superiors and as such was received as a boon by the community. During his whole experience in India, he said, he had known of no institution so prized by those who enjoyed its benefits or more gratifying to the whole people.<sup>1</sup>

The abolition of such privileges found little popular favour, and the reduction of all to a common legal level was neither understood nor appreciated by those whom it affected adversely. The levelling process was a grievance which was voiced during the rising at Benares in 1799 under Vizier Ali, the deposed Nawab of Oudh. The courts of justice were then blamed for placing the great and low on an equality with which, it was said, all classes were dissatisfied.<sup>2</sup> It was a grievance which, as mentioned in Chapter II, found vent more than half a century later during the Mutiny of 1857. Even after it there was a lingering feeling of soreness on the subject among the classes which were no longer in a privileged position. In illustration of this attitude the remarks made by a man of good family and position, apparently in 1866-7, to Bishop Thoburn of the American Methodist Episcopal Church may be quoted. He scouted the idea of there being one law for high and low, rich and poor.

'In the days of our Rajas', he said, 'if any man without a well-established reputation ventured to go into court and lodge a complaint against a respectable person like myself, if he did not make good his accusation, he knew very well that he would probably have both his ears cut off and be turned out of court. Hence, in those days no such men ever ventured to make such a complaint or show their faces in any place near a court; but now see how it is. Any low-caste man can not only go to the English court and lodge a complaint against me, but he can compel me to meet him in open court face to face and answer his questions as if I were a common man of no standing whatever. It is this that we complain of. There is no honour, no sense of right, no justice left. That which you call justice and impartiality is really wrong and oppression.'<sup>3</sup>

An amazing conception of the principles of justice! Naturally the feelings of other classes were very different. Those that are down

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Cotton, *Mountstuart Elphinstone* (1892), p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> *Vizier Ali Khan or the Massacre of Benares* (1844), p. 58.

<sup>3</sup> Bishop J. M. Thoburn, *India and Malaya* (Cincinnati, 1893), p. 69.



need fear no fall; the even justice which was the proud man's poison was the poor man's meat. Their feelings on the subject may be gauged by the remarks recently made by a Punjab peasant, who was asked how he liked the new régime by which power had been transferred from British to Indian hands. He said it was quite to his liking, but 'to give the devil his due, the rule of the British had been a poor man's rule'—a description which he explained by saying that rich and poor had been alike in the eyes of the law and no one, however powerful, could attack a man's honour or his property without incurring the risk of being sent to jail or having a decree passed against him.<sup>1</sup>

There appears also to have been at one time some objection to the penal law on the ground that it put women and children on the same footing as men. Sir Henry Maine, who was in India for seven of the first eight years after the Indian Penal Code came into operation, tells us of a collection of street songs which, without exception, declared that life in India had become intolerable since the English criminal law had begun to treat women as if they were men.<sup>2</sup> He also tells us that on one occasion, when he remarked to an Indian member of the Legislative Council, who was criticizing some project of law, that if his view were accepted, there would be no difference between wifehood and slavery, the latter replied: 'But that is the very doctrine from which we take our start.'<sup>3</sup>

Lastly, reference should be made to the disappearance in British India of the village courts, known as *panchayats*, whose place has been taken by regular courts of law. Their supersession must be attributed more to the free choice of the people than to the direct action of government. The latter was indirectly responsible because it established a system of judicial courts, in which the people found advantages not possessed by their own *panchayats*.<sup>4</sup> The latter were really courts of arbitration, which adjudicated with the consent of the parties interested and appear to have had no means of coercion or of enforcing their decisions beyond the

<sup>1</sup> Sir Firozkhan Noon, 'India and Canada: Some Comparisons', *Asiatic Review* (1939), p. 102.

<sup>2</sup> H. S. Maine, *Village Communities in the East and West* (1876), pp. 115-16. The pre-existing principle was expressed in *fatwas* or ruling of Muslim law-officers that a prisoner could not be convicted on the evidence of a female or a minor. See Sir R. K. Wilson, *An Introduction to the Study of Anglo-Muham-madan Law* (1894), p. 114.

<sup>3</sup> S. Smith, *Twelve Indian Statesmen* (1897), p. 268.

<sup>4</sup> In *India in 1880* Sir Richard Temple remarked: 'Nothing would have pleased the Government better than to maintain, develop, and dignify this institution, if the people would but acquiesce, but they will not. In the Punjab persistent efforts were put forth to naturalize this institution under the British arrangements, and to induce the suitors to resort to arbitration, but the people would not have it. Their preference for standing tribunals, with judges appointed by the State, is remarkable.'

power of public opinion. There is also reason to believe that, though their decisions were prompt and clear when the facts were well known, they were dilatory and ineffective when cases were doubtful or were complicated by the spirit of faction. Even Sir Thomas Munro, who was an ardent admirer of the *panchayats*, admitted that decisions given by them and by various local officers were irregular and often corrupt and arbitrary, but he held that they dispensed as much real justice as the law courts and with less delay.<sup>1</sup> They fell into desuetude simply because of the superior attractions of judicial courts supported by the arm of the law. The latter were not merely courts of arbitration, but were vested with authority to compel the attendance of parties and witnesses, as well as to effect the execution of decrees; they did not leave cases undecided; and in addition to this, anyone aggrieved by an order passed by a *panchayat*, or unable to obtain a decision from it, could resort to them for redress.

One unexpected result of the change was the prevalence of perjury. It was noticed that, when cases were heard in tribunals remote from the villages, perjury was as common as truthfulness had been in the village courts. Those who would have been ashamed to lie in the presence of their neighbours and village elders did not scruple to do so away from the restraining influence of village opinion. Perjury was such a novel phenomenon that the people themselves were genuinely perturbed and bewildered when it first became noticeable, and found in it the reason for blights, crop diseases, and diminished fertility, which were sent as a divine punishment.

'We attribute', said one man to Sir William Sleeman in 1836, 'all these evils to the dreadful system of perjury which the practices of your judicial courts have brought among the people. . . . God Almighty can stand this no longer. This is almost the only fault which we have, any of us, to find with your government; men by this system of perjury are able to cheat each other out of their rights and bring down sterility upon the land, by which the innocent are made to suffer for the guilty.'<sup>2</sup>

Fourteen years later Sleeman found that people in Oudh, who had

<sup>1</sup> G. R. Gleig, *Life of Major-General Sir Thomas Munro* (1830), vol. iii, p. 367.

<sup>2</sup> *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official* (1893), vol. ii, pp. 26, 49-50. Sir William Sleeman was so impressed by the contrast between the truthfulness of villagers in their own surroundings and the prevalence of perjury in the courts that he devoted a whole chapter to it, in which he distinguished between their truthfulness *inter se* and their untruthfulness in their dealings with the representatives of government. According to him, they spoke as much truth as any other communities in the world in their relations with one another, but told as many lies in their relations with the government, so much so that a government officer would say that the truth was not in them. A man who told a lie to cheat his neighbour became an object of hatred and contempt; but if he did so to save his neighbour's fields from an increase of rent or tax, he became an object of esteem and respect.



lived for a time in a British district, were no less shocked by the prevalence of perjury in the courts of law, which, they declared, resulted in a confusion of right and wrong and enabled the guilty to escape punishment.<sup>1</sup> Nor were villagers the only persons who deplored the rampant vice of perjury. An Indian of some fortune in Madras seriously suggested to Lord Macaulay in 1834 that there should be legislation providing that every man who committed perjury should have his great toe cut off—a suggestion which Macaulay described as an exquisite specimen of legislative wisdom.<sup>2</sup>

## MEDICAL SCIENCE

Just as there are three main systems of law in India, Hindu, Islamic, and English, so there are three co-existent systems of medicine and surgery. There is the Ayurvedic system of the Hindus, which is of great antiquity; it is so named from an ancient medical work, the *Ayur Veda*, and retains some of the features which characterized it at an early age, such as the attention paid, and the importance attached, to dietary. In the fourth century A.C. Megasthenes noticed that the Indian physician effected cures rather by regulating the diet than by the use of medicines; he also referred to a more doubtful skill, that of making marriages fruitful and of determining sex. The Yunani (or Unani) system, based on the teaching of Hippocrates, Galen, and Avicenna, was introduced by the Muslims when they came to India; the original meaning of the name was Greek, as it had its foundations in the works of Greek masters, which were translated into Arabic. Thirdly, there is the western system of medicine and surgery, which is a comparatively recent import and has brought with it two things new to India—a system of charitable hospitals and dispensaries and a system of sanitary science.

The European nations which planted settlements in India brought their doctors with them, who attended to men of their own nationality, but in Goa at any rate the Portuguese engaged the services of Indian practitioners. According to Van Linschoten, who was at Goa between 1583 and 1588, the Portuguese, from the Viceroy and Archbishop down to the monks and friars, put more trust in the 'heathen physicians' than in their own doctors; the Indian doctors were held in such honour that they were allowed to go about with attendants holding umbrellas over them—a privilege otherwise reserved for ambassadors and wealthy merchants. The British established hospitals in their own settlements, which had, however, not a good reputation, if we can credit the statement made by Captain Alexander Hamilton early in the

<sup>1</sup> *A Journey through the Kingdom of Oudh* (1858), pp. 66-7.

<sup>2</sup> G. O. Trevelyan, *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* (1884), p. 270.

eighteenth century about the hospital in Calcutta that many went in to undergo the penance of physic, but few came out to give an account of the operation.<sup>1</sup> The account of the hospital in Bombay which was given by John Burnell<sup>2</sup> suggests that 'Abandon hope all ye who enter here' might have been inscribed over its portals, for most of the patients died. It adjoined the cemetery, which was crowded with the graves of soldiers, whose only tombstones were rocks piled up to prevent jackals disinterring their bodies, and we are grimly told that the nightly concert of jackals woke the sick man to thoughts of what a dainty morsel he would make for them.

For a long time there were neither hospitals nor doctors trained in western medicine and surgery outside the chief cities and cantonments. 'All that we have as yet done', wrote Sir William Sleeman in 1839, 'has been to provide medical attendants for our European officers, regiments, and jails', adding, however, that it must not be supposed that the people of India were without medical advice, for there was not a considerable town or village without its practitioners, Hindu and Muslim. The educated classes sought the aid of European surgeons wherever they could obtain it, surgery being an art in which they felt that they were helpless; but they had no confidence in the prescriptions of European physicians and preferred the services of their countrymen. Incidentally, the latter in some parts of the country pursued their calling at some personal risk, being liable to be killed if they failed to effect a cure. Sleeman tells us that he had had to try several cases in which the father of an ailing child stood over the doctor with a drawn sword, and killed him the moment the patient died, as he had sworn to do when he saw the child failing.

The great mass of the people were so little acquainted with the causes of diseases that three-fourths of them were attributed to the evil eye and the malign influence of evil spirits. 'For every physician among them there are certainly ten exorcisers. The faith in them is very great and very general.' Poor and ignorant, they cherished the fond belief that every European was skilled in the art of surgery and flocked round travellers and touring officials imploring their aid. Sleeman describes the poignancy of the feelings of himself and others who had daily to tell poor parents who came with aching hearts and tearful eyes, carrying their sick children in their arms, that they either had not the knowledge or had not the time and means to relieve their suffering. 'It is better thus to dash to the ground the cup of hope which our approach has raised to the lip of the mother, father and child; but he consoles

<sup>1</sup> *New Account of the East Indies* (1727).

<sup>2</sup> *Bombay in the days of Queen Anne* (Hakluyt Society, Series II, vol. lxxii, 1933).



himself with the prospect that at no distant period a benevolent and enlightened government will distribute over the land those from whom the afflicted will not seek relief in vain.<sup>1</sup> In these last words Sleeman was evidently referring to the recent establishment by government of medical colleges at Calcutta and Madras, in order, as was said at the time, to raise up Indian medical practitioners educated on sound European principles, who would supersede quacks unacquainted with anatomy and the simplest principles of chemical action.<sup>2</sup>

Indian surgery and medicine had made great strides in very early times. Physicians had a copious pharmacopeia, from which Europe borrowed. The system of medicine was concerned with the preservation of health and the prevention of diseases as much as with their cure. Surgery was based on anatomy. An ancient work the *Samhita* of Susruta, which was a standard authority, laid down that no accurate account of any part of the body could be given without a knowledge of anatomy, and that anyone who desired to acquire that knowledge must operate on a dead body and carefully examine all its parts. Among other things surgeons practised lithotomy and performed abdominal and uterine operations; a speciality was made of making artificial noses by plastic surgery, an operation which was a valuable asset in a country where jealous husbands not infrequently cut off the noses of wives of whose infidelity they were either convinced or suspicious. This was an operation which European doctors adopted after they became acquainted with it in the eighteenth century.

But the healing art fell from its high estate. The indigenous Ayurvedic system and the Muslim Yunani system stood still while the West advanced. They became stereotyped and remained in ignorance of the discoveries made by science in Europe. Dissection fell under a Brahmanical ban because it necessitated the handling of dead bodies, which caused ceremonial pollution. Before the Medical College in Calcutta was opened an institution had been started for the training of assistants to European medical officers, but there was only one teacher, ignorant of English, who had to use medical pamphlets translated into Hindustani, and the only dissection was that of animals. Otherwise the only medical education was the instruction given by Sanskrit or Arabic colleges in ancient Hindu medical works and in the systems of Galen and Hippocrates with the addition of a few scraps of European medical science. Human anatomy was learnt by means of models of wax or wood or not learnt at all. The great mass of the people were

<sup>1</sup> See *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official* (1893), vol. i, pp. 87, 129-30, 205. The manuscript of this work was completed in 1839, but it was not published till 1844.

<sup>2</sup> C. E. Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People in India* (1838), p. 28.

dependent on the ministrations of untrained empirics, who supplemented their nostrums by spells and charms.

The establishment of medical colleges was the first step to the creation of a medical service staffed by Indians trained on western lines, which, as Lord Auckland said in 1842, was intended to disseminate throughout India the benefit of the healing art taught in its best forms and applied on the best principles. They were established in the teeth of opposition from orthodox Hindus, and the first dissection by a high caste Hindu produced a feeling of horror and consternation; on the other hand the student who defied established canons by handling a dissecting knife was acclaimed as a hero by the liberal and progressive. On account of the prejudice against anatomy, the medical students were at first mainly Muslims, few Hindus having the hardihood to challenge Brahmanical fiat; but the prejudice died down as it became apparent that the profession was both honourable and lucrative. Hindus readily entered it and displayed a high degree of skill and proficiency. Other medical colleges were added in course of time, and there were in 1938 ten with nearly 1,800 students besides twenty-eight medical schools, i.e. institutions imparting medical education of a lower standard. Most of the students have found employment in the State medical services; a small minority have set up in private practice. Hospitals and dispensaries have been established by government, local bodies, and Christian missionaries, and now number about 6,700 in British India,<sup>1</sup> the hospitals being mostly at district headquarters and dispensaries scattered through rural areas. An Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, which was started in 1933 through the generosity of the Rockefeller Foundation, trains medical graduates in public health and investigates public health problems.

Mr. Gandhi has denounced the western system of medical science. A chapter of his *Hind Swaraj* or *Indian Home Rule* is devoted to doctors, whom he condemns wholesale.

'Doctors', he says, 'are injurious to mankind, but European doctors are the worst of all. They violate the religious instinct, for many of their medical preparations contain either animal fat or spirituous liquor, which are taboo to Hindus and Muslims. Medical treatment fosters self-indulgence, so that men are deprived of self-control and become effeminate. Hospitals are institutions for propagating sin. . . . To study European medicine is to deepen our slavery.'

He even goes so far as to say that he sometimes thinks that quacks are better than highly qualified doctors, and he ends the chapter

<sup>1</sup> Figures for the States are not available. In the advanced State of Mysore there is one medical institution for every 96 square miles and for every 21,000 persons; but this record is exceptional.



with the remark 'Are not quacks then, whom we know, better than the doctors who put on an air of humaneness?'<sup>1</sup> These sentiments are not shared by the generality of his countrymen, to whom the positive benefits conferred by medical science are evident. Hostile critics of British rule, who are reluctant to admit that anything good can come out of what they call British imperialism, make this an exception. The writer has heard ardent nationalists give ungrudging praise to the work of European and Anglo-Indian hospital nurses, while regretting that they are dependent on their ministrations owing to the disinclination of Indian women to take to nursing. Their work and that of the officers in charge of hospitals have done much to give the British character a high place in popular esteem.

Medical science has been of great demographic importance by reducing the toll of death levied by epidemic disease, which was formerly one of the checks on the increase of population. An account of the cholera epidemic of 1817-18 shows how only a little over a century ago a disease which had been endemic could assume epidemic form and decimate the population without anything being done to arrest its progress. Starting in the district of Jessore it spread through every part of India and then made its way through Persia into Russia. In Bundelkhand it attacked the army under the command of the Marquess of Hastings, and converted the camp into a hospital for about ten days, and caused about 11,000 deaths. The route over which the army marched is said to have been strewn with the dead and dying. The bazaars were deserted, and the only means which the people had of averting the visitations of the disease are described as consisting of crowded visits to the temples, which increased the danger of infection, or sanguinary proceedings against persons suspected of witchcraft, which were no more effective in checking its onward march.<sup>2</sup>

India is still a focus of infectious diseases. Epidemics still cause great and widespread mortality; cholera and small-pox are endemic; it has been estimated that there are 100 million sufferers from malaria; many millions have died of bubonic plague since 1896, when it was brought to India from China; the number of deaths caused by the influenza epidemic of 1918 has been variously estimated at six or seven millions and twelve or thirteen

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gandhi, however, when suffering from appendicitis, elected to have an operation performed by a British surgeon. He admitted the inconsistency between practice and precept (according to which physical ailments should be overcome by soul-force), saying that as his illness was a result of infirmity of thought and mind, so his submission to the surgical operation was an additional infirmity of mind. C. F. Andrews, *Mahatma Gandhi: his own story* (1930), p. 337.

<sup>2</sup> See H. Murray, *History of British India* (1857), pp. 511-15.

millions. The problem is complicated by poverty and malnutrition, sometimes meaning too little food and sometimes bad food, but in either case diminishing the powers of resistance to disease. But war is steadily and systematically waged against disease by doctors equipped with weapons forged in the armoury of medical science, and progress has been made in its conquest. Mortality is reduced by preventive and curative measures. Outbreaks of epidemic disease are localized and there are no longer the terrible pestilences which formerly swept over the country and decimated the population. The ravages of malarial fever have been lessened by prophylactic and curative treatment with quinine. Knowledge of its causation and manner of propagation has been advanced by Professor Laveran's discovery of the parasite in 1880 and by the work of Sir Ronald Ross, which proved in 1898 that infection was transmitted by the female of the anopheles mosquito, since when there has been a new line of attack on this public enemy. Dr. Haffkine discovered an anti-plague serum. The researches of Sir Leonard Rogers and Dr. Muir, and the devoted labours of the Mission to Lepers in India and the West, have helped to mitigate the scourge of leprosy so long thought to be incurable, and over 1,000 leprosy clinics have been opened.<sup>1</sup> The treatment of *kala azar* with intravenous injections of antimony has made it possible to control that disease, which used to work havoc in Assam. Pasteur institutes giving anti-rabies treatment have been established at Kasauli, Coonoor, Shillong, Patna, Bombay, and Calcutta. Since 1911 medical research has been promoted by the Indian Research Fund Association, which has made a special study of problems of nutrition. A measure of protection against small-pox has been afforded by vaccination, which however has had to contend against prejudice and superstition,<sup>2</sup> and is far from universal. It is compulsory in about three-fourths of the towns, but in less than half of the rural area. It is estimated that over 50 per cent. of the infants are unprotected and are therefore susceptible to the disease, so that small-pox is still a major problem of public health.

Public health staffs have been organized, though here again much remains to be done; over half the municipalities and three-quarters of the districts are still without medical officers of health. Measures of public health have transformed cities, notably Calcutta, the name of which was identified soon after its foundation with Golgotha, the place of skulls, and which two centuries later

<sup>1</sup> In pre-British days lepers not uncommonly committed suicide and in some parts were buried alive.

<sup>2</sup> 'If', observed Sir Alfred Lyall, 'vaccination could only be ordained theologically, it would have an immense success in India; but the English insist on explaining it otherwise and thereby set theology against it.' *Asiatic Studies* (1884), p. 58.



could be stigmatized as 'the city of dreadful night'. In 1782 William Mackintosh wrote in *Travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa* that from California on the west to Japan on the east there was not a place where taste, decency, and convenience were so grossly insulted as in 'that scattered and confused chaos of houses, huts, sheds, streets, lanes, alleys, windings, gullies, sinks, and tanks which, jumbled into an undistinguished mass of filth and corruption, equally offensive to human sense and health, compose the capital of the English Company's government in India'. In 1864 Sir John Strachey stated (in his reports as president of a sanitary commission) that Calcutta was hardly fit for civilized men to live in. 'To nine-tenths of the inhabitants clean water was unknown. The filth of the city rotted in pestilential ditches or was thrown into the river Hooghly, where, with the corpses thrown into its stream,<sup>1</sup> it moved backwards and forwards with the tide. As a result of the commission the practice of throwing corpses into the river was prohibited, not without protest; it was represented that the ban was an insidious attack on the Hindu religion. Other reforms were gradually introduced; conditions were transformed by drainage and sewage systems and the installation of a pure water supply—the last an innovation which met at first with some opposition, objections being made on religious grounds to filtered water drawn through pipes. Before Sir John Strachey's death in 1907 he was able to point out that there were few cities in Europe with which many parts of Calcutta need fear comparison, that, though there was still room for improvement, there was hardly a city in the world which had made greater progress, and that this was a good example of what had been, and was still, going on in India.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, nearly one-third of the towns having a population of over 30,000 are still without a proper water supply, and less than one-tenth of those having a smaller population have a protected supply. Conditions in the villages are, moreover, generally deplorable, the primary essentials of public hygiene, conservancy, water supply, and drainage, being lacking in spite of the efforts made by government, local bodies, and unofficial organizations. The funds available are utterly inadequate, and although endeavours are made to educate the villagers in the lessons of hygiene and the principles of self-help, there seems to be little response on their part. Even in urban areas there is often an attitude of indifference and sometimes of actual hostility; in one large city there is an Anti-flush Society, so-called because it opposes the flush system of sanitation.

<sup>1</sup> In 1857 a relative of the writer counted eighty-five corpses in the Hooghly in a single day, and this was, he believed, below the daily average.

<sup>2</sup> *India: Its Administration and Progress* (1911), p. 11.

One branch of medical work in India which calls for special mention is that which has been undertaken since 1885, when the Countess of Dufferin founded the 'National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid for the Women of India', an institution generally known simply as Lady Dufferin's Fund, which had for its object the relief of women's suffering by women. Women in India, as Pandita Ramabai pointed out three years earlier, are much more reserved than in other countries, and most would rather die than speak of their ailments to a man. The want of women doctors was consequently the cause of hundreds of thousands dying premature deaths.<sup>1</sup> The women of India may therefore well bless the name of Lady Dufferin, for she initiated a movement which has been of untold benefit to them and their children, though the number who can be reached is all too small; the field is so large, the labourers so few. Women's hospitals and women's wards in general hospitals have been opened, women doctors, nurses, and midwives trained and supplied; a Women's Medical Service for India has been established, which is administered and financed by the fund with the aid of a government grant. It was in charge of twenty-five women's hospitals in 1937, at which 53,000 in-patients and nearly a million out-patients were treated. The wives of later Viceroys have carried on the good work begun by Lady Dufferin and various institutions are associated with their names, e.g. the Victoria Memorial Scholarship Fund for training midwives, which was organized by Lady Curzon in 1903, Lady Minto's Nursing Association inaugurated in 1906, and the Lady Hardinge Medical College and Hospital at Delhi, opened in 1916, which are staffed entirely by women. One of the best and latest of India's imports from the West is maternity and child welfare work, which owes much to the Maternity and Child Welfare Bureau, started in 1918 (as an All-India League) by Lady Chelmsford, as well as to the Indian Red Cross Society, which was established two years later. The movement, which has enormous potentialities for good, is organized on western lines with clinics, welfare centres, health visitors, lecturers, exhibitions, cinema films, baby weeks, &c. Work so far has been carried on mainly in the towns but it is spreading to the villages, and it is making its way into the States as well as through the provinces of British India. In Mysore, for example, nearly fifty villages have opened maternity homes.

In spite, however, of all that has been done the majority of the people live and die without qualified medical attendance. Comparatively few come into contact with western medical science, except as represented by medical officers in charge of hospitals and dispensaries, of which the former are mainly in urban areas. There

<sup>1</sup> Evidence before the Education Commission, 1882.



are only about 4,300 hospitals and dispensaries in rural areas in British India, where each serves on the average 62,000 persons. Efforts are being made to remedy this state of affairs. In the Punjab, where 375 rural dispensaries have been established in the past twenty years, there is now hardly a village that is not within ten miles of one. In Madras there is a scheme for subsidizing private practitioners, of whom about 500 have settled in the villages. A scheme on the same lines was tried in the United Provinces, where there is only one hospital or dispensary for every 81,000 persons, but it failed, only twenty-five practitioners being ready to take advantage of it. In this province, according to a statement made by the Minister of Health (Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit) at the All-India Medical Conference of 1938, medical aid is still practically non-existent in rural areas, and dispensaries, where they exist, are not as popular as they should be.

In British India as a whole there are, according to an estimate made in the same year, some 35,000 to 40,000 doctors qualified by western standards, but unfortunately they are not distributed evenly over the country, so that, though there is roughly one to every 8,000 or 9,000 persons (compared with about one to a thousand in Great Britain), the proportion in rural areas is much lower. As in other agricultural countries they are chiefly congregated in urban areas; inquiries have shown that in many towns there is one doctor to every thousand or less of the population. They show little inclination to settle in the country, where social amenities and educational facilities are few and earnings are small. Their earnings in rural areas are small partly because the poorer classes cannot afford their fees and partly because of competition with other kinds of practitioners, Ayurvedic, Yunani, and also homoeopathic doctors, as well as mere quacks. There is no law or rule to prevent men practising medicine unless they have recognized diplomas. The western legislation of control has not been introduced and anyone is free to exercise the healing art or what is supposed to be such.

Medical experts point out that the old Indian systems are unscientific in principles and methods, and having failed to take advantage of modern discoveries in the understanding and treatment of disease, are as defective as the medicine of the Middle Ages in Europe. The Ayurvedic system, in particular, has been criticized because it contains many ideas which have been exploded or are palpably absurd. Even a modern book on the subject recommends certain drugs as being panaceas for all female diseases however caused or as able to effect a simultaneous cure for such different ailments as obesity and gonorrhoea.<sup>1</sup> Both this and the Yunani

<sup>1</sup> See Sir Patrick Hehir, *The Medical Profession in India* (1923), p. 104.

system have admittedly fallen into disrepute both because of their inherent defects and because they have been practised by untrained empirics, whose knowledge scarcely extends beyond herbalism and massage, and whose prescriptions consist of obsolete nostrums. But there are others of a much higher class, men who have gone through a long course of specialized training, e.g. five years at Benares and Aligarh, and have been taught some branches of medicine by teachers who have obtained medical degrees in Indian or European medical colleges. Moreover, practitioners who are ignorant of anatomy or unskilled in surgery are often expert in diagnosis and have an extensive knowledge of the value of medicinal herbs. There are time-old cures which have been handed down from generation to generation. Certain it is that the western has not superseded the indigenous systems. In Madras government maintains a School of Indian Medicine for training students in Ayurveda, and in 1937-8 local bodies controlled 236 Ayurvedic medical institutions in addition to 911 institutions following the western system. The superiority of European surgery is admitted, but the virtue of European medicines is suspect. The remedies of the allopathic doctor are believed to be too drastic, and it is thought that he fails to pay the same careful attention to the question of diet as his competitors of the old Indian schools. Many well-informed Indians, who presumably judge by results, prefer the services of the latter. Of late years the feeling in favour of the Ayurvedic system has been fostered by nationalist sentiment, which urges that it should be given State recognition. This demand is resisted on the ground that medical science has no place for a narrow nationalism and that sentiment should not override reason and common sense.

The majority of the people are still unfortunately without qualified medical aid and are dependent on men who rely on herbs, the abracadabra of spells and incantations, and the use of the branding iron. Caution has a considerable vogue; much faith is placed in the curative value of cow-dung, which may be plastered all over the head; concoctions of herbs and leaves are sold as certain cures for plague and other epidemic or endemic diseases. There are masses of peasants entirely ignorant of the causes of disease, which they ascribe to possession by, or the malignant influence of, evil spirits, and who trust to charms or prayers and oblations offered either to the great gods of Hinduism or to the godlings of the village in order to avert illness or to obtain relief from suffering. The goddesses of small-pox, Sitala in North and Mariamman in South India, have millions of votaries, who firmly believe that offerings to them will keep away the disease or end an epidemic if one breaks out. Various godlings preside over divers other diseases, such as



cholera, fever, and diseases of the skin; one will protect children from infantile ailments. All receive their due meed of offerings. There are also symbolical methods of driving away diseases such as plague and cholera, the spirits of which may be carried away in baskets or carted away in miniature carts, which are driven to the boundaries of the villages concerned. Exorcists are called in to expel evil spirits and a terrible amount of suffering is caused by their methods, chillies and pepper, for example, being rubbed into the eyes or the body branded with a red-hot iron.

## EDUCATION

The history of education since the inception of British rule may be divided into three periods. The first period, which lasted till 1835, may be called the orientalizing period, as during it the government gave a certain amount of encouragement to oriental learning and provided a few institutions for its maintenance or furtherance, though it acknowledged no direct responsibility for education until 1813. Its main business was to create the conditions of peace and prosperity which would enable education to be carried on in such schools as the people themselves desired and were willing to support by their own unaided efforts. In 1813 a new conception of its duties was introduced by the Charter Act, which authorized the Governor-General to make an annual appropriation from the revenues of British India 'for the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India'. It seems obvious from the language of the clause that it was intended that oriental learning, which Lord Minto had reported to be in danger of dying out, should be resuscitated and given new life and that a new element should at the same time be introduced, viz. the scientific knowledge which was to be found in the West and the West alone. The two were regarded not as incompatible but as complementary to one another. Actually, however, the educational fund was for many years expended on oriental learning only, much to the indignation of Raja Ram Mohan Ray, who in 1823 pointed out to Lord Amherst that the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep the country in darkness if, as he sarcastically said, that had been the intention of the British legislature. As, however, intellectual improvement was the object of government, the latter was bound to promote a more liberal and enlightened system, in which mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, and other useful sciences would be included.

One other point should be noticed. The educational clause of the Charter Act was not mandatory but permissive—'it shall be lawful'. But from the first an annual appropriation was made as a matter of course, the East India Company realizing that a responsibility for supplying the educational needs of British India had been imposed on it by the British Parliament, which had acknowledged no such responsibility for its own people. Ten years later a Committee of Public Instruction was constituted for the administration of the educational fund. This body antedated by sixteen years the creation of a similar body in Great Britain, viz. a committee of the Privy Council, which was charged with superintending the expenditure of the small sums voted by Parliament for the purpose of promoting public education. The only kind of education which came within the purview of the Committee was the education of the classes. There was no idea of promoting popular education. In Great Britain the general attitude towards the education of the unlettered masses was one of indifference, and a more enlightened and liberal outlook could not be expected in India. When Dr. Marshman of the Baptist Mission at Serampore published in 1814 a pamphlet entitled *Hints for the Establishment of Native Schools*, which advocated an extension of educational facilities to all and sundry, the proposition was considered so extraordinary that the whole of the brochure was reproduced in a popular encyclopaedia as 'one of the wonders of the age'.<sup>1</sup>

The second period, which may be called the anglicizing period, began in 1835, when higher education was definitely de-orientalized, its avowed aim being the promotion of western knowledge by means of the English language. The latter was adopted as a medium not only because of its inherent superiority to the classical languages of India but also because of the preference expressed for it by the more vocal representatives of the cultured classes, who were identified with the people as a whole. 'The natives', said Macaulay, 'are desirous to be taught English and are not desirous to be taught Sanscrit or Arabic'. English learning was 'the learning for which they are craving'. The mother tongues of the people did not come into the picture. They were not even mentioned in the government resolution adopting English, and they were dismissed in a few lines by Macaulay, who thought they were scarcely worth considering, as it was generally agreed that they were devoid of the literary and scientific knowledge necessary for a liberal education. In Bombay there was a controversy ten years later as to whether English or the vernaculars<sup>2</sup> should be preferred, but in the British

<sup>1</sup> G. Smith, *Twelve Indian Statesmen* (1897), p. 230.

<sup>2</sup> This term has been banished from the official vocabulary in India, but it is common in educational literature and has the advantage of being a concise generic term for the languages of daily speech used in different parts of India.



territories in North India the only point at issue was whether English or the classical languages should be the medium of higher education. The medium of primary education would naturally be the language in common use. As the Committee pointed out a few months later, if English had been rejected in favour of Arabic and Sanskrit, the masses must have continued to be instructed in their mother tongues.

Lord William Bentinck endorsed Macaulay's minute with an admirably brief and comprehensive note, viz. 'I give my entire concurrence to the sentiments expressed in this minute'. The decision so concisely worded was revolutionary. It altered the basis of higher education entirely. Hitherto Muslims had studied Arabic, a living but foreign language. Hindus studied a dead language, Sanskrit, but few except Brahmans had the privilege of learning it, and long years of study were necessary for its mastery.<sup>1</sup> Both found common ground in the study of Persian, another foreign language, which was the language of culture among the literati of North India and also until 1837 the language of judicial proceedings. Its knowledge, however, was confined to a small minority, and it had so little currency that when it was replaced in the law courts by the Indian languages in daily use it is said to have melted away like snow.

Macaulay was on sure ground in his argument about the advantages of English. It was the language of a progressive civilization; it was the key with which the door of modern scientific knowledge and liberalizing thought could be unlocked; above all, its study was open to all irrespective of caste. His argument that it was in popular demand had less foundation. There was, it is true, a certain volume of opinion in favour of it, but it was mainly the opinion of the more vocal and more progressive representatives of the Hindus, who valued English both for its own sake as the language of progress, and because knowledge of it opened out the way to power and position. The Muslims were not among those who craved for an English education. A large number preferred an education which would give their sons a place of honour among the learned men of their own community to one which would equip them for official or professional life. Twelve years earlier they seem to have manifested a desire to become proficient in English, but this phase had passed away. One of Macaulay's opponents on the Committee of Public Instruction, Henry Thoby Prinsep, confidently stated that not a single member would venture to assert that any desire

<sup>1</sup> The course at the Sanskrit college in Calcutta extended over twelve years, of which six were spent in learning grammar and composition. According to a contemporary account law and literature took ten years each and logic thirteen. See C. E. Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India* (1888), p. 109.

to learn English had as yet shown itself extensively among the Muslims. It was confined to the Hindus, the descendants and relations of those who had possessed power and exercised influence under former governments, those who had risen through their connexion with the English, and those who had sought employment for which a knowledge of English was a necessary qualification. There was, he declared, no reason to believe that the Muslims in any part of India would be reconciled to the cultivation of English, much less to giving it a preference to the polite literature of Islam. The only reply which Macaulay was able to give was a note saying: 'There is no good English school for the Mussulmans, and one of our first duties is to establish one.'<sup>1</sup> The feelings of the Muslims were correctly interpreted by Prinsep. They had an attachment to the learning of Islam, to the language of their Holy Book, and to Persian, the language of culture, which Macaulay was incapable of understanding or appreciating. They insisted, as they still do, on the teaching of Islam as one of the most essential ingredients of the education of a Muslim boy, and they would not consent to its supersession by a foreign system of a secular nature. Nothing was done to adjust the new system to their susceptibilities and to meet their requirements. Even when universities were established twenty-two years later, oriental classics were excluded from the curriculum, there was for some time no oriental faculty, and Muslim colleges were ineligible for affiliation.

English education for the upper classes was the only objective at this time. Elementary education continued as before in such village schools as were in existence. These are sometimes described as constituting a network spread over the country, but the mesh was far from close. A survey made for Madras in 1822 showed 12,498 institutions of all kinds with 184,110 scholars in a population estimated at nearly 13 millions. Sir Thomas Munro not unjustly claimed that the state of education, though low compared with England, was higher than in most European countries; but the fact remains that there was an average of only one school to approximately every thousand persons and of 15 pupils for each school. The results were a little better in Bombay, where in 1829 there were 1,705 schools and 35,143 scholars in a population of a little over 4½ millions—an average of 20 pupils for each school but of only one school for every 2,750 persons. Instruction was, moreover, according to Elphinstone, confined to Brahmans, Banyans, i.e. the mercantile classes, and such of the agricultural classes as had to do with accounts. He made it his object to improve the quality and increase the number of the village schools,

<sup>1</sup> M. R. Paranjpe, *A Source Book of Modern Indian Education, 1797 to 1902* (1938), p. 40.



and his policy met with some local support and consequently with a measure of success. In Madras Sir Thomas Munro worked on the same lines, but the schools which he founded died out for want of pupils, and a scheme for the encouragement of indigenous schools was rejected by the Directors of the East India Company, who only wanted to have a body of men 'qualified by habits and acquirements to take a larger share, and occupy higher positions, in the civic administration than had hitherto been the practice'.

A few days before he endorsed Macaulay's minute, Lord William Bentinck directed that a survey should be made of the village schools in Bengal and Bihar, which he believed might be made 'subsidiary and conducive to any improved general system which it might be hereafter thought proper to establish'. A survey was carried out in selected areas in Bengal and Bihar by the Rev. William Adam, who found 2,632 schools in a population of 5,875,000 persons, or one school to every 2,230 inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> They were often small, often inefficient; many were mere hedge-schools; but he believed that they could be improved and made the basis of a system of popular education. To whatever extent they existed, and whatever their condition, they furnished, in his opinion, the only true and sure foundations on which any scheme of general or national education could be established. His proposals fell on deaf ears. The government had quite enough to do with starting English schools: its funds were limited, and there was no money to spare for elementary schools. There was indeed only £24,000 available for education in the whole of the great Bengal presidency.

In any case, there was no idea that a national system of education was the business of governments, and the government in India did not feel called upon to provide it any more than in Great Britain, where education was still left to private agencies. State grants to education in that country only began in 1834, when they amounted only to £20,000 a year. In 1837 it was estimated that about one-fourth of all the children in England and Wales received no instruction whatever; according to a statement made in the House of Commons, 49 per cent. of the boys and 57 per cent. of the girls of thirteen to fourteen years could not read, and 67 and 88 per cent. respectively could not write. Not unnaturally therefore State efforts in India were concentrated on the education of the upper and middle classes, those who were wanted for the administrative

<sup>1</sup> In his first report Adam greatly over-estimated the number of schools he believed to be in existence, giving an estimate of 100,000 schools, or one school to every 400 persons. In that report he relied on figures supplied by others. The figures given above are contained in his third report, which was based on inquiries made by himself in areas which he considered typical. On the total population (15½ millions) which he assigned to Bengal and Bihar they would represent an aggregate of 16,000 schools. See Sir P. Hartog, *Some Aspects of Indian Education Past and Present* (1939), pp. 13, 75 ff.

personnel and those who were believed to have the power of directing the public mind and were regarded as the natural leaders of the people. There was at the same time a vague, nebulous idea that knowledge would spread from the towns to the villages and filter down from the classes to the masses.

The masses were not prepared to make any efforts themselves. Either they wanted no schools at all, or they were content with those already in existence, or they thought that if more schools were started, they should teach English and so afford a ladder by which they might rise. Their general attitude to elementary education was one of apathy and indifference, while the classes, though eager enough to get English schools for themselves, saw no reason why they should be the missionaries of education among the people. Efforts to improve and extend primary education were made in the North-Western Provinces by the Lieutenant-Governor, James Thomason, who aimed at a school in each village, or, if that were not practicable, in every group of villages, and tried to work with the existing material. 'I want', he said, 'to do something consonant with native institutions and also to induce the people to work with me and exert themselves in the cause.'<sup>1</sup> Actually, the people showed little inclination to exert themselves and progress was slow. In Bengal again desultory efforts were made by government to start improved primary schools, but they met with little success and two-thirds died out within a decade for want of support.

The third period, which may be called the anglo-vernacular period, began with the issue of Sir Charles Wood's educational dispatch in 1854. The objective was the same as before, viz. the diffusion of western, and not eastern, knowledge and learning, and it was now explicitly laid down that active measures were to be taken to extend them to all classes of the people—by means of their own languages to the masses and by the use of English, 'by far the most perfect medium', in higher education. In the latter case, however, the vernaculars were not to be neglected, for English was to be combined with a study of them and with such general instruction as could be conveyed through them. The students in secondary schools and colleges were thus to be bilingual. The dispatch justified and confirmed the bifurcation of studies which had begun in 1835, pointing out that it had been, and still was, a necessity for those who desired to obtain a liberal education to begin by mastering the English language, 'the key to the literature of Europe', owing to the want of translations or adaptations of European works in the different languages spoken in India, as well as to the very imperfect shape in which European knowledge was to be found in the

<sup>1</sup> Sir R. Temple, *James Thomason* (1893), p. 174.



learned languages of the East. Any intention to make a change in this respect was categorically disclaimed.

'A knowledge of English will always be essential to those natives of India who aspire to a high order of education. But it is neither our aim nor desire to substitute the English language for the vernacular dialects of the country. And any acquaintance with improved European knowledge which is to be communicated to the great mass of the people—whose circumstances prevent them from acquiring a high order of education, and who cannot be expected to overcome the difficulties of a foreign language—can only be conveyed to them through one or other of these vernacular languages.'

So far little had been done by government for the masses except in Bombay, and even there the figures show no great advance, for only 216 vernacular schools, with about 12,000 pupils, were in existence under the management of the Board of Education. In Bengal secondary education had reached a point higher than in any other part of India. 'Very little has, however, been hitherto done in Bengal for the education of the mass of the people.' In Madras, again, 'little has yet been done by Government to promote the education of the mass of the people'; and the dispatch could only remark with satisfaction that the educational efforts of the Christian missionaries had been more successful among the Tamil population than in any other part of India. In the North-Western Provinces, however, Thomason's system had, it was believed, paved the way for a great advance in the education of the lower classes, and this was recommended for general adoption as the model by which the efforts of other provinces should be guided.

The State responsibility for primary education was now at length definitely recognized, and it was given a place in the educational programme. At the same time education was to be systematized, schools were to come under inspection, the system of grants-in-aid which had been successful in Great Britain was to be introduced in India both for vernacular and English schools, and the educational pyramid was to be capped by universities. All of this was in advance of anything so far attempted in England, where the educational grant in 1846 was still only £58,000. There the view still prevailed that the promotion of popular education was not a function of government. Less than a half of the children of school-going age went to school, and there was no effort to introduce a national system till 1870.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The strictures passed by Justin McCarthy, in his *Short History of our own Times*, on the state of education before that date are worth quoting. 'The manner in which England had neglected the education of her poor children had long been a reproach to her civilization. She was behind every other great country in the world; she was behind many countries that in nowise professed to be great. . . . Private charity was eked out in a parsimonious and miserable manner by a

Bengal, which included the present provinces of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and also, up to 1874, Assam, had been urged to encourage the indigenous schools, but English educational officers scorned them as primitive and inefficient. They had no regular school-houses, but were held in private houses, in sheds, in the court-yards of temples in Hindu villages and the precincts of mosques in Muslim villages, under trees or in the open air. They were thus in many ways like the old Irish hedge-school, which was held in the cabin of the master but moved, when weather permitted, to the shade of a neighbouring hedge, where the boys, who left school at the age of thirteen or fourteen, enjoyed the fresh air and had less enjoyment in learning their lessons. The Indian schoolmaster started his day's work by going from house to house to collect his pupils, and earned a meagre and precarious income from fees and free gifts. He taught the more advanced pupils himself; beginners were left to elder boys who acted as pupil-teachers. Often there were no books, and boys were taught to write on the sand or on palm-leaves with an iron stylus. But these little schools may be said to have delivered the goods, as the boys learnt to read and to write, to count and to cipher, in many cases, Sir George Campbell said, with a rapidity and accuracy which would put to shame many a skilled European accountant.<sup>1</sup> They were, however, not encouraged by the Bengal Education Department, which until 1872 refused to recognize anything that did not conform to its model and to its ideas of efficiency.

It was then obvious that primary education lagged far behind secondary and higher education, and that the filtration theory was based on false premisses. It was condemned by Lord Mayo during his short viceroyalty (1869-72).

'I dislike', he wrote (in a private letter), 'this filtration theory. In Bengal we are educating in English a few hundred Babus at great expense to the State. Many of them are well able to pay for themselves and have no other object in learning than to qualify for government employ. In the meantime we have done nothing towards extending knowledge to the million. The Babus will never do it. The more education you give them, the more they will keep to themselves and make their increased knowledge a means of tyranny. If you wait till the bad English, which the four hundred Babus learn in Calcutta, filters down

scanty dole from the State. . . . It therefore came about that more than two-thirds of the children of the country were absolutely without instruction.' The last figure appears to be an over-estimate.

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of my Indian Career* (1893), vol. ii, p. 321. The same facility impressed Sir Monier Monier-Williams. 'What struck me as a remarkable feature of the teaching was the skill attained in multiplication. The multiplicand generally ascends to forty and often higher. . . . They can all multiply by fractions, particularly by  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{8}$ , and  $\frac{1}{16}$ , and they can multiply  $2\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $3\frac{1}{2}$ , and  $4\frac{1}{2}$  by the fraction  $\frac{1}{2}$ . *Modern India and the Indians* (1879), p. 296.



into the forty millions of Bengal, you will ultimately be a Silurian rock instead of a retired judge. Let the Babus learn English by all means. But let us also try to do something towards teaching the three Rs to Rural Bengal.<sup>1</sup>

The Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir George Campbell, inaugurated a new policy, which brought the village schools into the educational system. Village communities and private individuals were encouraged to set up schools with government assistance. All village schoolmasters who maintained tolerably efficient schools, and who were prepared to submit returns and to agree to a certain measure of inspection and control, were given subsidies or grants-in-aid. The result was a great and rapid extension of primary education, not however without adverse criticism from those who had no sympathy for popular education and objected to the diversion of funds to it from higher education.<sup>2</sup> Before the new system was put into force there were only 2,500 recognized schools with 65,000 pupils; in 1883 the number of the former was 16,000 and of the latter over a million.

In the latter year an Education Committee representative of different classes and interests concluded a survey of the whole field of education, and it was claimed that the results of its labours were to place public instruction on a broader and more popular basis, to give a more adequate recognition to the indigenous schools, to provide that the education of the people should advance at a more equal pace along with the instruction of the upper class—in brief, to develop the Department of Public Instruction into a system of truly national education for India, with a network of schools graduated from the indigenous village institutions up to the highest colleges.<sup>3</sup>

The most noticeable features of the subsequent history of education have been the ardent, almost insatiable, demand for higher education in colleges and secondary schools, and the comparative indifference to primary education shown by those for whom it is intended—a feeling, it may be noted, which has some economic foundation. The Indian rustic is poor. Boys are required to help with the cattle or in the fields and girls in the house. They can ill be spared for schooling, and it is thought that they can be better employed in helping the family than in learning letters and acquiring accomplishments of doubtful value. There was also for

<sup>1</sup> Sir W. W. Hunter, *The East of Mayo* (1891), pp. 179-80. *Rural Bengal*, by Sir William Hunter, had recently been published.

<sup>2</sup> One newspaper, the *Samaj Darpan*, objected that in order to qualify for grants-in-aid village schoolmasters actually enticed boys to go to their schools without payment of fees. It added that, once there, they learnt nothing, and, what was worse, were prevented from tending cattle and doing other agricultural work.

<sup>3</sup> Sir W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Empire* (1893), vol. ii, p. 562.

a long time a feeling of indifference on the part of what may be called the directing classes, who were interested only in providing facilities for higher education, but their attitude has changed during the present century owing to the spirit of nationalism. A lead was given by the late Mr. G. K. Gokhale, who made it his object to stir up his countrymen to a sense of the need of universal education for the sake of national well-being and the national reputation.

'It is obvious', he said in 1903, 'that an ignorant and illiterate nation can never make any solid progress and must fall back in the race of life. What we therefore want, and want most urgently, is first of all a wide-spread diffusion of elementary education, an effective and comprehensive system of primary schools for the masses; and the longer this work is delayed, the more insuperable will be our difficulties in gaining for ourselves a recognized place among the nations of the world.'<sup>1</sup>

The problem was to be solved by importing a western system, viz. compulsory primary education, and he introduced a Bill to that effect in 1911. This fell to the ground, but the seed he had sown germinated. The idea spread and gathered force that the apathy of the masses must be broken down, and illiteracy liquidated—to use a common Indian phrase. Compulsory education Acts have been passed in various provinces. The results are, however, disappointing. Various causes have prevented the Acts being implemented except in a comparatively few areas, notably the lack of trained teachers and even more the lack of funds, for the cost of universal education is completely beyond the financial resources of the country.<sup>2</sup> There has been progress, but so far as the great majority of the people are concerned, the goal is still far away in the offing.

There is an amount of university and secondary education comparable to that found in European countries, but the great majority of the people are illiterate. There is, as in pre-British days, a hiatus between a highly educated class and an unlettered proletariat. There is, however, this difference that the number of the former is now immeasurably greater because any Hindu, whatever his caste, can aspire to the higher education which is based on English, whereas formerly all castes except Brahmans and Vaidyas were debarred from learning so long as it was confined to the sacrosanct Sanskrit. At the same time the old system of Sanskrit learning has continued in Sanskrit colleges, and in the

<sup>1</sup> E. L. Turnbull and H. G. D. Turnbull, *Gopal Krishna Gokhale* (Trichur, 1934), pp. 74-5.

<sup>2</sup> Bengal with 51,000,000 inhabitants and Bombay with 18,000,000 have each only £9,000,000 a year from which the cost not only of education but of other public services (e.g. police, justice, and health) has to be met.



Brahman institutions known as *tols*. It has also attracted students of other castes, who learn it in secular colleges and schools. There appears indeed to have been a revival of Sanskrit learning since the establishment of universities in 1857, before which time it was scarcely taught outside the Sanskrit colleges and *tols*; and it has followed somewhat different lines, being studied on the principles of European philology and no longer merely memorized.

As regards the masses the position cannot perhaps be explained better than in the remarks made in 1921 by the Indian superintendent of the census in Cochin, a State in which education is widely spread:

'What determines literacy in any community is, in the first instance, the nature of the occupations it usually follows, that is, whether they are such as require a knowledge of reading and writing, and, in the second instance, whether there are any special facilities within reach which attract the members of the community to learn, though there be no great need for the learning. The pursuit of letters purely as a means of intellectual growth is mostly a figment of the theorist.'

Education is, in fact, desired chiefly by those to whom it is requisite as a professional qualification, or to whom it is believed to offer prospects of well-paid employment, or of attaining a position of greater respectability. The object of learning is, in brief, earning, and it is desired by only a minority of those who have no such incentives. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are accomplishments which are neither valued for their own sakes nor thought to be necessary for agriculture and labour, the occupations of the great majority. There is a certain feeling of vocational exclusiveness, a certain tendency to specialization of functions, which may also be seen in the caste system. Learning is the traditional function of those who have specialized in it for generations, and not of the cultivator or labourer, who can on occasions call in the professional letter-writer if he wants his services. English education is on a different plane because it is thought to be an essential qualification for honourable employment, particularly in the public services, and to open up a way to influence or affluence. A number of those who are indifferent to primary education want English education for their sons, believing that it will enable them to discard manual labour and gain a social rise, for the soft-fingered, black-coated worker is thought to be a being superior to the horny-handed son of the soil.

There is an eager demand for it on the part of their social superiors which has influenced the whole course of higher education. The desire, amounting almost to a passion, for government service and professional careers created a demand for English education in the first instance, which was met by the foundation of

colleges and schools in growing numbers. In its turn, the progressive increase in the number of students whom they turned out created and strengthened a demand for posts in the services and the professions which it has been impossible to satisfy. Consequently, there has been a great deal of educated unemployment, but in spite of this the belief in the potential value of this kind of education has scarcely been shaken; the result of learning may be a lottery but there is always the chance of drawing a winning ticket. This belief has even had some effect on social values, for university degrees, which are the visible cachet of success, still add to the price which bridegrooms can command in the marriage market though experience has shown that it is often an inflated value. Notwithstanding disappointment and disillusionment the passion for learning is unabated, and it is pursued at the cost of self-sacrifice ungrudgingly undergone by parents. They pinch and pare in order to secure the means of education for their sons, and the latter often undergo privations, which, with the labour of unremitting study, are apt to take heavy toll of youth and vitality.

University education started in 1857 with the establishment at Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay of universities modelled on the then University of London, the form, government, and functions of which were held to be the best adapted to the needs of India. They were intended to be not so much seats of learning or places of instruction as to test the value of education elsewhere. Their main function was simply to hold examinations and to confer degrees on successful candidates coming from 'affiliated' colleges, for which they could prescribe courses but over whose methods of teaching they had no control. The colleges, which were scattered over a wide area, were thus independent institutions with no uniform methods or standards. The universities were merely central degree-giving bodies, which examined those whom they had not taught. Two more universities, those of the Punjab and Allahabad, were started in 1882 and 1887 respectively, and the latter was given power to assume the functions of a teaching body, but it did not exercise that power and merely conformed to the type of the examining universities. The movement in favour of higher education gathered momentum until it became almost beyond control. More and more colleges were added: the Calcutta University which began with ten had by 1902 altogether 78 colleges affiliated to it; Madras had 54, Allahabad 30, and the Punjab University 15; Bombay was content with a modest 11. Up to this time the Punjab University alone recognized teaching through the medium of the current Indian languages as part of its system; but the results were not encouraging, partly, it was said, because of neglect, partly because of the difficulty of obtaining lecturers competent to impart



western learning in those languages, and partly because of the absence of text-books written in them.

The whole system was directed to one end—the study of prescribed subjects by means of prescribed English text-books in order to pass examinations and obtain degrees. This, and not the acquisition of general knowledge, was the be-all and the end-all. Instruction was looked on solely as a means of matriculating at a university and then of obtaining a degree. Success in examinations was confused with education. Some students undoubtedly reached a high level, but the general average was low. A few Indians were dissatisfied, but the majority were content with the system. It was naïvely argued that universities were intended to confer degrees, and the more degrees they granted the better must they be. If the numbers were large, it did not matter if the standards were low. The desideratum was extensiveness rather than intensiveness, quantity rather than quality. Attempts to raise standards were resisted as being calculated to shut the doors of education in the face of an eager people. India's primary need was the dissipation of ignorance by cheap and abundant education. National development would be hampered unless there was a smooth and easy path to, and through, the universities. The demand for higher education was thus more social and political than intellectual. It was regarded more as the condition of national advance than as the instrument of learning and culture.

A measure of reform was introduced by the Universities Act of 1904, but the system remained fundamentally the same, for the universities were still, in the main, examining bodies. The addition of post-graduate studies gave them a new function as teaching bodies, but otherwise they had no concern with learning except in so far as it could be tested by means of examinations. All preliminary training was left to the constituent colleges, over which, however, they were now given some powers of supervision and control.

A new policy began in 1913, when the Government of India laid down that it was essential to restrict the area over which the affiliating universities—so far five only—had control, by securing a separate university for each of the major provinces, and secondly to create within each of the provinces new local teaching and residential universities in harmony with the best modern opinion as to the right road to educational efficiency. The best modern opinion was afforded by the Sadler Commission, and a new era set in with an increased number of universities, including unitary universities of a teaching and residential character besides affiliating and examining universities of the older pattern. New universities came in quick succession—the Benares Hindu University

and the University of Mysore in 1916, the Patna University in 1917, the Osmania University at Hyderabad in 1918, the Aligarh Muslim University and the University of Lucknow in 1920, the University of Dacca in 1921, the University of Delhi in 1922, the University of Nagpur in 1923, the Andhra University at Waltair (serving the northern districts of Madras) in 1926, the Agra University in 1927, the Annamalai<sup>1</sup> University at Chidambaram (for the southern districts of Madras) in 1929, and the Travancore University at Trivandrum in 1937. There are thus altogether eighteen universities, of which three are in the States, where there were none till 1916; of these seven (Aligarh, Allahabad, Annamalai, Benares, Dacca, Delhi, and Lucknow) are unitary; two (Aligarh and Benares) are communal. There is yet another university of a novel type, which is however unrecognized—the Indian Women's University at Poona, or to give it its full title the Srimati Damodar Thackersey Indian Women's University, which owed its foundation in 1916 to the efforts of Dr. Karve and to the munificence of a merchant-prince of Bombay, whose mother is commemorated by its name. Nor should mention be omitted of another institution of a special kind, which, though not a university, does work of a university standard, the Indian Institute of Science at Bangalore, which was founded in 1911 by the Parsi millionaire, Sir Jamsedji Tata.

What, it may now be asked, have been the reactions of the people of India to the system and what have been its effects? There has been great argument about it. Few subjects have given rise to more controversy. High hopes were entertained by the promoters of English education a century ago. India, it was confidently expected, would become quite another country. The knowledge derived from the West would be an engine of intellectual and moral regeneration. It would effect a religious revolution, as Hinduism would give way before the light of European science. There was not the same hope of making a breach in the strong entrenchments of Islam, but little doubt was entertained that the spell of the Brahmans would be broken, and the people would no longer be under their dominion. A sacerdotal class would no more have the power of controlling opinion, but knowledge and power would pass to the people themselves, who would co-operate in religious and social reform. The enlightenment due to education would reconcile the people to British rule and even engender a sense of attachment to it. Education in English, according to Mountstuart Elphinstone, was a political necessity. The British were exposed to danger from the precarious foundation of their government, owing to the total

<sup>1</sup> So named after Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar, to whose benefaction its foundation was due.



separation between them and the people, and the only means of ensuring its stability was to communicate their own principles and opinions by the diffusion of a rational education. The spirit of English literature, Trevelyan wrote in 1838, in his brochure *On the Education of the People of India*, could not but be favourable to the English connexion, forgetting that it is the literature of freedom and calculated to inspire a spirit of nationalism and independence. The confidence and affection of the people, he said, would increase in proportion to their knowledge of the English, ignoring the possibility that such knowledge might have the opposite effect; as Shakespeare said: 'If there be no great love in the beginning, yet heaven may decrease it upon better acquaintance.'

Experience has shown that the people generally have been touched to no active affection for their rulers and that attachment to their government is due mainly to a certain sense of self-interest. There has been a union of interests but no real union of hearts. Other hopes have proved illusory or have only been realized in part. There has been an intellectual regeneration; literature has assumed many different forms and gained a new and fuller content; journalism has released fresh currents of thought. The control of public opinion has been transferred to another class. Those who have the advantage of English education have by virtue of their enlightenment, prosperity, and authority, become a directing class. There have been movements of social reform, but the social system has been little changed; a breach has scarcely been made in caste and untouchability. There have been movements of religious reform, but within, and not against, Hinduism, for its purification and not its destruction. Among the masses the Brahman still reigns supreme in matters of religious observance, which in India are closely connected with social life.

Macaulay expressed his firm belief that if the plans of education were followed up there would not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal in thirty years' time. This marvellous mass conversion would be effected merely by the natural operation of knowledge and reflection, without any efforts to proselytize and without the smallest interference with religious liberty. This was a forecast made in a private letter, of which the falsity was soon obvious. The forecast made in a public document, his famous minute, has, however, not been falsified, viz. that the languages of western Europe would do for India what they had done for Russia, and that its people, like those of Russia, would emerge from ignorance and take their place among civilized communities. He drew a picture of a large educated class in reformed Russia abounding with persons fit to serve the State in the highest functions and in no wise inferior to the most accomplished men who adorn the

best circles of Paris and London. It is stating the obvious to say that a picture in the same colours could be painted of India to-day.

There are men of the highest attainments who bear themselves worthily in the councils of the nations, men distinguished in literature and law, in the arts and sciences, whose culture admits them to the parliament of man, the world-wide federation of thought. The award within a single generation of the Nobel prize to two of India's sons—one for literature, and the other for science—is in itself no mean testimony to the high level which has been reached. As in Tsarist Russia there was a cultured circle talking French, familiar with the works of Herbert Spencer, Huxley, John Stuart Mill, and later English writers, and appreciating humorous and serious English authors like Dickens and others, so in India there is a highly educated class which speaks English fluently, is widely read in English literature, and keeps abreast with modern European thought. These are the bright lights of the picture. There are other and darker colours, which are brought out in the report on education in India in the year 1935-6 by the Educational Commissioner. The prevailing discontent against the system of education, it is said, is finding wide expression, and there is a consensus of opinion that stagnation and wastage are appalling, that the administration of primary education by local bodies shows no improvement and is thoroughly inefficient, that compulsory primary education appears as remote as ever, that the annual increase in the percentage of literates is disconcertingly small, that the universities contain many students who are unfitted to profit by higher academic studies, that unemployment amongst the educated classes is common, and that provision for the education of girls is ludicrously inadequate.

There can be little doubt that the use of a foreign language as the basis of higher education has been a stumbling block. It is perfectly true, as Mr. Cunningham points out in Chapter IV, that the use of another tongue has long been part of education in India. Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian were all taught long before the British appeared on the scene. It is also true that other races have learnt through the medium of a language other than their mother tongue and that in India the people themselves have shown a predilection for English. But the fact remains that the use of a foreign language as a medium is a real handicap. Years are spent in trying to master it, and in the end there is only too often an imperfect digestion of knowledge because the language of study is not the language of thought. Students are hampered by having to learn, and express their ideas in, a language other than that of daily life. There is much mechanical learning in which words are



divorced from realities. The spontaneous and natural expression of thought is stifled.

'It is perfectly pathetic', writes an educational officer, 'to see the average student mentally searching for nouns and conjugating verbs before he speaks and writes his ideas. . . . As English is at present taught and assimilated, ideas are literally throttled before they can be expressed. Entangled in the net of an ill-taught language, the student flounders among his ideas, giving them a partial or wrong setting, and is much surprised when his efforts are condemned. That facility with the language which does not dam the current of ideas is the attainment of only a few of our best students, and, far from progress being evident, the unfortunate experience both of others and myself is, to put it in an Irish way, that progress is backward.'

Indians themselves have, however, until recent years been passively content with the system, and there have been few attempts to break away from it. At one time Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan protested against the domination of English and urged that government should provide access to the stores of western knowledge through the media of the languages of the Indian people, but his was a voice crying in the wilderness. His views found little sympathy either from his own countrymen or from English administrators. One of the latter, Sir Alfred Lyall, while admitting the severe obstacle imposed by having to master a strange language, pointed out that it was one which government should hardly attempt to remove, 'for we cannot undertake to translate European literature for the benefit of our Indian fellow-subjects, the best of whom would laugh at paltry abridgements and imperfect renderings'.<sup>2</sup> The task has, however, been undertaken in the Osmania University at Hyderabad, where the medium of instruction is Urdu, with English, however, as a compulsory second language. Here a special bureau for the translation of books has been able to provide some hundreds of text-books in Urdu; incidentally it is said to have had to coin over 40,000 technical words in that language.

English still holds its own for many reasons. It is still the language of public administration; knowledge of it opens up prospects of employment at home and abroad. It is the gateway of knowledge of science, medicine, and law; even now many of the Indian languages are unsuitable for conveying modern, and particularly scientific, thought. It is above all a world-language which keeps India abreast with the West. In defence of the continued employment of English it is pointed out by Indians themselves that their own languages are so deficient in literature on

<sup>1</sup> R. N. Gilchrist, *Indian Nationality* (1920), pp. 78-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Asiatic Studies* (1884), p. 253.

modern subjects that, in order to have a knowledge of politics, economics, and science, they have no option but to resort to English books. Further, it is admitted that however poor the results of English education, however limited the resultant culture may often be, it is an incontrovertible fact that it has conferred signal benefits on India, which owes to it a great measure of the progress and unity it has achieved during the last hundred years. It has broken the mental isolation of India and brought it into contact with western ideas. The sluices have been opened, a fertilizing stream of knowledge has flowed over the country. It has produced, it has been said, an army of clerks, but it has also given India the leaders of most of the political, social, and humanitarian movements which have taken place.

One of the charges which is most frequently and insistently levelled by Indians against the system of education is that it has been, and is, excessively literary and insufficiently vocational, that it is neither adjusted to the industrial needs of India nor designed to further industrial and economic progress. It may be liberal, it is said, but it is not practical, for it provides a training which qualifies only for a few callings, such as the public services, the learned professions, and clerical employment, the number of posts in which is incommensurate with the number of educated men fit to fill them. India is therefore said to have an educated youth for which there is no proper outlet. There is, to use a common phrase, an academic proletariat, of which a large proportion is either totally unemployed or can only obtain poorly paid employment which is unworthy of its attainments and an utterly inadequate reward for long years of mental toil.

The course taken by the British has certainly been different from that followed in their dependencies by other nations such as the Japanese whose policy has been summed up as follows by Baron M. Saito, the Governor-General of Korea, 'The economic development of the country must come first. Education and the raising of the standards of the people will follow. Afterwards political development may be possible'. In India, on the contrary, little was done for a long time to accelerate economic progress by developing natural resources and fostering agriculture and industry. It is particularly noticeable how little attention was paid to the prime industry of the country—agriculture. It was not till nearly half a century after universities had been established that an institute of agricultural research was founded, and that was due to the munificence of a foreigner, Mr. Phipps of the United States of America, and the insight of Lord Curzon, to whom he left the choice of the object to which his benefaction should be devoted. Industrial progress did not keep pace with educational progress,



so far as the higher branches of the latter were concerned. Secondary schools, colleges, and universities multiplied, but the posts which could be filled by those who studied in them were insufficient. Higher education outstripped the economic advance, the output being in excess of the capacity of the country to absorb it whether in commerce or industry, government service or the professions. Unemployment among the more highly educated began to be a problem at least sixty years ago. It was noticed in 1879 that the difficulty of finding suitable employment for the thousands of young men who had been educated badly and unsuitably was becoming more embarrassing every day.<sup>1</sup> University graduates, it was said next year, unable to make a living by other means, went about from office to office seeking low-paid work as clerks, and discontent and restlessness were the natural consequences of frustrated ambitions.<sup>2</sup>

Almost identical language is used at the present day. As in 1880, there is said to be an educated youth wandering aimlessly in search of employment, but now forced to accept even lower paid work than that of clerks. University graduates in Bombay have been driven to serve as police constables; in Mysore cases are reported of students committing suicide in despair of finding suitable employment. Middle-class unemployment is recognized as being a political as well as an economic problem owing to the unrest created among a disappointed and discontented class, but so far no solution of it has been found. Though the root cause of the trouble is believed by most Indians to be the fact that the educational system does not fit its recipients for new and economically profitable pursuits, others who have studied the question find it in the fact that the middle class is one which for generations has been engaged in literary callings and which looks down on manual labour and industrial work as derogatory. A remedy can therefore only be found in a complete change of outlook, as was forcibly pointed out by a nationalist leader, Bipin Chandra Pal, in a debate on the subject in the central legislature in 1926: 'Unless you are able to change the mentality of our people, unless we are able to change the entire social system, which is not democratic or socialistic in the sense in which these things are understood in other parts of the world, it will not be possible to solve the question.'

Proposals calculated to change this mentality have been made by Mr. Gandhi in what is known as the Wardha educational scheme. The basic idea of that scheme is that elementary education should be imparted through some craft or productive work, which should form the nucleus of all other instruction. The idea of handwork

<sup>1</sup> M. Monier-Williams, *Modern India and the Indians* (1879), p. 220.

<sup>2</sup> Sir R. Temple, *India in 1880* (1881), p. 135.

or manual training as a part of education has long been familiar to the western world, but, largely no doubt because of the high authority of its sponsor, it seems to have come as a kind of inspired revelation to Indian intellectuals. It has been rapturously acclaimed as a solution of the problem of free education as well as of employment, for it is hoped that children will produce enough to pay the cost of their education and so make possible the introduction of free and compulsory education, of which the cost would otherwise be prohibitive. It remains to be seen whether, and in what form, the scheme will be generally adopted, and, if so, what its results will be. Already, as a result of criticism, both constructive and destructive, it has been revised and changed to such an extent that it has become very different from the original simple plan of self-supporting elementary education centred on some form of manual work.

The universities supply the ranks of the professional classes to a degree unparalleled in Europe. Recruits for the higher grades of the public services and for the liberal professions—magistrates, lawyers, doctors, engineers, journalists, &c.—are drawn from them as well as merchants and business men. It is regarded as a normal thing that a boy should go to a university in order to qualify for a career, instead of leaving school in order to have a specialized course of training or going straight into the occupation which he or his parents have chosen. It must not be imagined that no steps were taken to provide training for non-literary professions and for trade and industry. Institutions were set up for training in specialized subjects such as engineering, forestry, medicine, and even commerce; schools of art were started; lower in the scale there were technical schools, though at one time they were objected to on the ground that they would aggravate existing difficulties by adding to the educated unemployed a number of unemployables for whom there was no commercial demand. But efforts to give a training in manufacturing and industrial processes were to a great extent frustrated by those concerned. The literary classes and those who were, by heredity or long-continued custom, associated with the administration or with the learned professions disliked manual labour and showed comparatively little inclination to mechanical callings. The employment they desired was that determined by their traditions, which was dissociated from labour. Many were prepared to sink their objections if they could go straight into superior posts of direction or control but not to serve as apprentices or to start from the bottom and work upwards. Members of industrial classes preferred their hereditary methods and were unwilling to undergo a course of specialized training in order to learn new methods of production. It was not an unusual



experience to find members of non-industrial classes taking advantage of the general and cheap education given at technical schools on account of their cheapness and then joining the great army of clerks instead of following the trade they had been taught; similarly, students of agricultural colleges were apt to use them as a means of approach to government service. In these and other ways inadequate or improper advantage was taken of such opportunities as there were for vocational or industrial training, and the attempts to provide it were largely infructuous. Those who have Indian interests at heart have long endeavoured to instil other ideas. The imagination of leading Indians has been struck by the results of technical education in other countries, especially Germany and Japan, and there has been a demand for more vocational education. But a university education is still the natural goal of ambition, and other forms of education are looked down upon as inferior. As has recently been pointed out by the Vice-Chancellor of Madras University, there is still a superstition that practical students are not quite respectable and that technical education is a relatively low type of education.

Of all the objections made by Indians to the system of education perhaps the commonest and bitterest is to its secular character. It is criticized as being alien to the Indian temperament, which is essentially religious, and as offending against the cherished conviction that religious and moral instruction is a necessary part of education. To it are ascribed a decline or disappearance of respect of youth for age, a denial of the natural authority of parents over their children and of teachers over their pupils, a widespread disregard of religious and social sanctions, and a growth of moral laxity. There have not been wanting men who deny the truth of this sweeping indictment, e.g. Mr. Justice K. T. Telang, Vice-Chancellor of Bombay University, who countered the statement that the policy of religious neutrality, necessitating a secular education, had been, by common consent, injurious from a moral and religious point of view with the declaration that the charges against the system, under which he and many of his friends had been nurtured, were wholly and absolutely unsustainable, 'the results of imperfect and hasty generalization put into words by random and often reckless rhetoric'.<sup>1</sup> Others take a contrary view and condemn the system of secular education in strong terms. A typical statement is that the godless education which the schools have imparted during the past hundred years is largely responsible for the indiscipline, disorder, and anarchy found in the individual and social lives of young India.

It is believed that the pre-British system was not open to

<sup>1</sup> M. R. Paranjpe, *A Source Book of Modern Indian Education* (1938), p. 211.

reproach on this score, but this belief is not apparently warranted, if we may judge from the accounts of the state of the indigenous schools before they were affected by western influences and a secular form of education. Lord Moira observed in 1815 that the general, the sad effect of the indigenous system of education was that the inculcation of moral principles formed no part of it. The Rev. W. Adam, who, in 1835-8, made an exhaustive inquiry into the state of vernacular education in Bengal and Bihar, was impressed by the prevalence of indiscipline and the lack of any provision for moral education. The discipline and management were, in general, the worst that could be conceived, for they consisted in the absence of almost all regular discipline and management. Such a notion as the moral influence of teachers over pupils never entered into the conceptions of the teachers. There was intellectual education and also a certain amount of religious education, the religious sentiment being early and perseveringly cherished; but in regard to the cultivation of moral sentiments and habits the system presented 'a complete blank'. Books and manuscripts were used only for conveying lessons in language, not for sharpening the moral perceptions or strengthening moral habits. 'This, in general native estimation, does not belong to the business of instruction, and it never appears to be thought of or attempted.'<sup>1</sup> Similar testimony was given nearly half a century later by an Indian writer, who observed: 'The principle on which a village school is conducted is essentially defective in morality. Instead of teaching the rules of good conduct and enforcing the first principles of morality, it often sadly defeats the primary object of a good education, namely, the formation of a sound, moral, and virtuous character.'<sup>2</sup>

The British government, pledged as it was to religious neutrality, felt itself precluded from making religious subjects part of the curriculum, but nothing was given more anxious thought than the necessity for moral as well as intellectual instruction. There was a constant endeavour, as shown in Chapter IV, to devise some means by which morality could be taught without religion. Beginning with Lord Moira's ingenuous suggestion in 1815 that village schoolmasters should be provided with little manuals of religious sentiments and ethical maxims, the subject was long and earnestly debated by the Education Commission of 1882-3, a body which was representative of various interests and forms of religious belief, Christian, Hindu, and Muslim. The Commission found in the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab a deep-seated and

<sup>1</sup> J. Long, *Adam's Reports on Vernacular Education in Bengal and Behar* (1868), pp. 94, 101, 105, 268, 279.

<sup>2</sup> S. C. Bose, *The Hindoos as They Are* (1883), p. 32.



widespread feeling that discipline and moral supervision required to be supplemented by definite instruction in the principles of morality, but, it was noted, this feeling was not so strong in provinces where western education had been most firmly established. It was baffled by the problem. All that it could recommend was that

- (1) an attempt should be made to prepare 'a moral text-book based on the fundamental principles of natural religion', which should be taught in colleges,
- (2) that a series of lectures on the duties of a man and a citizen should be given in the same institutions (though it was feared that this would be done in a perfunctory manner),
- (3) that teachers and inspecting officers should see that in primary schools the teaching and discipline should be such as to exert a right influence on the manners, the conduct, and the character of the children,
- (4) that a special manual should be prepared for the guidance of the masters.

Well might Sir William Hunter, the President of the Commission, remark a few years later that the meagre results of this solemn endeavour of a great and powerful Commission to provide religious teaching for two hundred millions of souls was one of the pathetic spectacles of modern history.<sup>1</sup> The subject was again reviewed by Lord Curzon's government in 1904, and this time the view was taken that such formal methods as the study of moral text-books and of primers of ethics were of little avail and that reliance must be placed on the influence of carefully selected and trained teachers.

It is obvious that the system of English education has been a solvent of old traditions and established beliefs, though probably more has been done by independent reading outside the college and school course than by the subjects and books taught in the curricula. Convictions which seemed ingrained have yielded to the corrosive action of new ideas. A questioning and critical spirit may be seen not only in the younger but also in the older generations, many of whom have only a tenuous or formal adhesion to their ancestral faith, frankly rejecting its traditional theology and making faint, half-hearted apologies for its practices. Some again tend to agnosticism or indifferentism. Others, unable to acquiesce in mere negation, endeavour to reconcile Hindu philosophic conceptions with those of the West—efforts which are indicative of a reaction against the ethos of the West accompanied by a certain attraction to it. As regards the difficult question of moral effects, there seems to be a tendency to exaggerate the

<sup>1</sup> Sir W. W. Hunter, *The India of the Queen* (1903), pp. 33-4.

influence of scholastic institutions and to overlook the fact that they are only one of the agencies for the formation of character. Home influences must be taken into account, especially as most of the students are day boys and only part of their day is spent in the classrooms. Nor should the effect of outside influences, unconnected with either home life, school life, or college life, be forgotten. Indian students mature at an early age, are extraordinarily susceptible to outside opinion, and are apt to be swept away by waves of emotion. Their feelings are easily played on, and this trait has been taken advantage of by agitators. Colleges and schools were nurseries of nationalism, and it was not enough that the students should be imbued with a spirit of nationalism. They were recruited for direct political action and organized in bodies of national volunteers or, for more sinister purposes, in bands of terrorists; and they enlisted readily, regardless of the wishes or counsels of parents and teachers. A typical case was that of a student who told his father that if he was following his body to the funeral pyre and met a political procession on the way, he would leave the funeral cortège and join it without a moment's hesitation.

Ideas of independence, self-sacrifice, and national service were implanted, which in many cases produced a revolutionary mentality. This has been assisted by economic factors. The deplorable amount of educated unemployment, the consequent waste of effort and opportunity, of good material and youthful enthusiasm, a bitter sense of frustrated ambition, have naturally created unrest. This is no new feature. Towards the end of last century, the Maharaja of Travancore pointed to the existence of 'a host of discontented, disobedient, and sometimes troublesome young men', who were becoming a political danger; and since then the position has become worse and not better.

At the present time other, but equally revolutionary, influences, in no way connected with the system of education, are at work—that of communism and of a perverted form of the trade-union spirit. Recent public utterances from representative Indians of different shades of thought are full of the prevalence and danger of these influences. Referring to the propaganda of youth organizations the President of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee remarked in April 1939 that Indian youth did not know what forces they were releasing by advocating the theories of class struggle or class war. Nor did they care to know. They were 'satisfied with spreading anarchy, indiscipline, and violence, and unleashing forces which they cannot control'. At the end of 1938 the Vice-Chancellor of the Annamalai University was constrained to send a circular letter to parents in which he referred to the atmosphere created among students by manifestoes and appeals in



which there was more than a flavour of the communist doctrine that goes readily and disastrously to the head of the young, but of which a more baneful ingredient was the spirit and temper of trade unionism. Imbued with this poisonous spirit, students mastered the technique of tendentious propaganda, collective bargaining, and pugnacious defiance, were ranged in a hostile camp against their teachers, repeated slogans of hate, and organized strikes and picketing. The Premier of Madras again, speaking a few months later, drew public attention to the new and strange conditions of student life, both in colleges and schools, in the modern age of conferences and congresses, unions and federations. Students' organizations, instead of submitting petitions, as they used to do, presented minimum demands, and asked for charters, bills of rights, and declarations of fundamental rights, and in order to get sanctions for their demands, took examples from the nationalist campaign, from civil disobedience, hunger-strikes, and non-co-operation. They looked on the teachers and university authorities as if the latter were in the same position as employers and capitalists and on themselves as if they were wage-earners and labourers, with students' unions, students' federations, contests, claims, minimum demands, courts of inquiry, and the like. To mention yet one more expression of opinion, in March 1939 an elder statesman of North India, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, in his convocation address to the Osmania University, found it necessary to remind his hearers that there was no affinity between a university and an industrial concern and to warn them against the mischief of strikes intended to enforce the will and judgement of those who were *in statu pupillari* against the will and judgement of those set in authority over them.

## CHRISTIANITY

The direct influence of Christianity is seen in the existence of a Christian community numbering some six millions, its indirect influence in the diffusion of Christian ideas among many who reject its system of theology. As a form of faith it may be said to be almost indigenous in the States of Travancore and Cochin, where the Syrian Church has had a continuous life of at least fourteen centuries, and where one-quarter of the population is now Christian. It came there from the East and not from the West, having in all probability been originally introduced by Nestorian missionaries.<sup>1</sup> Western Christianity was introduced by the Portuguese, and Roman Catholic missions have been established for over four centuries. Protestant missions have been at work for only

<sup>1</sup> The Syrian Christians have a tradition that their Church was founded by the apostle St. Thomas about A.D. 52 and proudly claim that they were Christians at a time when the British were heathens painted with wood.

half that time, and until the closing years of the eighteenth century consisted of Lutherans from Denmark and Germany, who covered a comparatively small field in South India. The first English mission to work in India was the Baptist mission, which was started by William Carey in 1793, and was followed five years later by the London Missionary Society.

So long as Christianity was not connected with a temporal power, there was a certain tolerance towards it. The Syrian Church was recognized, and even assisted with grants of land, by Hindu princes in South India. Under Maratha rule there was a Christian church at the Peshwa's capital, Poona, and Christians were not interfered with in the exercise of their religion. The feeling changed to one of apprehension with the acquisition of sovereign power by the British, while offence was given and resentment aroused by missionary propaganda of a crude character indiscriminately denouncing or abusing Islam or Hinduism. Propaganda of this nature was common in the early part of the nineteenth century, when it was customary for members of Protestant missions to refer to Muhammad as a false prophet and to Hinduism as a mass of idolatry, superstition, and ignorance. Provided, however, that they abstained from virulent attacks of this kind, and provided also there was no suspicion that they were either sponsored or supported by government, there was little hostility to missions, and their educational and philanthropic work was warmly appreciated. Alarm was, however, immediately created if language was used which was thought to imply that government should or would lend its authority to evangelization. The people were not afraid of their religions being subverted by argument, but they were intensely afraid of them being overthrown by the power of the State. The British profession and practice of religious neutrality were not sufficient to prevent suspicions of a sinister design on the part of the government to force its religion on its subjects. Most of the educated classes, it is true, recognized its religious detachment; incidentally, some used that detached attitude as an argument against Christianity itself, contending that it could not be a true religion, as otherwise the government would have taken steps to propagate it, as for instance by introducing its teachings in schools and colleges. But even the intelligentsia were not entirely free from suspicion and apprehension. At the time of the Vellore mutiny it was noticed that there was a genuine belief, not only among the sepoys, who were directly affected by an order prohibiting sectarian marks on their faces and prescribing the use of turbans, but also among well informed men of higher status and intelligence, that it was the deliberate purpose of government to effect their conversion to Christianity. The masses were filled



with mistrust of its intentions, and Christianity got all the suspicion and odium which attach to State support of a foreign proselytizing religion, though it actually had no such support. These fears found ready credence, such as one which explained the construction of caravanserais along the Grand Trunk Road by saying that one night, when they were crowded with travellers, the Governor-General would give orders for the doors to be shut and they would all be made Christians. How this would be done was left to the imagination. Vague fears of this kind were undoubtedly responsible in part for the Mutiny of 1857-8, but after it they were laid to rest by the proclamation of Queen Victoria. The people were reassured by her declaration that she had neither the right nor the desire to impose her religious convictions on any of her subjects and by her positive orders that there was to be no interference with religious belief or worship. It was recognized that the missions were purely voluntary and non-official agencies, and their work could be carried on without having to contend with the prejudice created by suspicion of the intentions of the ruling power.

On the introduction of higher English education, it was confidently believed that such an education would be an effective instrument of conversion. Hinduism would be undermined by an education infused by Christian thought; darkness would be dispelled by the light of knowledge. Thus, Mountstuart Elphinstone in 1824 declared that the conversion of the people must inevitably result from the diffusion of knowledge among them. Dr. Duff, addressing a Church General Assembly in 1835, expressed the belief that every branch of western knowledge would destroy some corresponding part of the Hindu system, and so one stone after another would be thrown down from 'the huge and hideous fabric of Hinduism. And by the time that an extensive range of instruction is completed the whole will be found to have crumbled into fragments; not a shred will be left behind.' Lord Shaftesbury, urging the appointment of a Hindu as astronomer's assistant in Bombay, thought that by contemplating the purity of Almightyness, he would soon learn to despise Brahma and Vishnu. 'Who knows but what he might become an Orpheus to his countrymen?' After the lapse of a century it is obvious how illusory these hopes were. The classes who, it was expected, would be convinced of the falsity of their ancestral religions by means of western education, and would thereupon turn to Christianity, have not done so.

Paradoxically enough, Christianity itself may be said in a way to have defeated the object of Christian evangelists, as contact with it has tended to purify and strengthen the religions to which it has been opposed, and so remove incentives to conversion.<sup>1</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> The Parsi reformer, B. M. Malabari, said: 'At a time when doubt and dis-

has made little headway in the higher grades of society. The great majority of the converts have been drawn from the lower strata, chiefly from the depressed classes known as untouchables, who used to be regarded as outside the pale of Hinduism, and from aboriginal tribes, which are still outside the pale; and the number of Christians is only 2 per cent. of the population.

The failure of Christianity to win more general acceptance may be attributed to a variety of causes. *In primis* there are the fundamental differences between its doctrines and those of Hinduism and Islam. Muslims cannot admit the divinity of Christ, and the doctrine of the Trinity is repugnant to their ideas of monotheism. As shown by Sir S. Radhakrishnan in Chapter IX, Hindus whose beliefs are rooted in Vedantism do not appreciate an exclusive doctrine of salvation. Christianity, as presented by missionaries, has been associated with particular Churches and their dogmas, and higher Hindu thought prefers the religion of the spirit to the religion of authority. Truth is too great to endure the limitations of dogma. This view is well expressed in the words which Sir Alfred Lyall put into the mouth of a fictitious Brahman, who held that the one commodity which Hindus would never be persuaded to import from Europe was religion.

'We cannot accept religion within a ring fence; we are still professors of the divine science, searching incessantly for the knowledge of the Supreme Being, One without a Second. . . . We recognize the moral significance and disciplinary influence of faith in authoritative creeds. But we are nevertheless incapable, intellectually, of understanding how such things can be conceived of as imposing finality. . . . We have never yet set limits, either by philosophic criticism or by ecclesiastical ordinance, to the range of free inquiry or to the thinking faculty; we cannot submit to the restrictions placed by faith upon inquiries into mysteries.'<sup>1</sup>

Apart from intellectual difficulties, there is, in the case of Hindus, the difficulty that Protestant missions require converts to abjure caste, in other words to change their social system at the same time that they change their religion. The complete abolition of caste distinctions is not demanded by either the Syrian or the Roman Catholic Church, though customs are banned which savour of idolatry. The caste system was moreover not proscribed by the Lutheran and Anglican Churches before 1833. The Lutheran Church took the view that the caste distinctions observed by its converts were of a civil rather than a religious character, and ensured for the higher castes respect in their own community and

trust are taking the place of reasoned inquiry among the younger generation of India, I feel bound to acknowledge the benefits I have derived from contact with the spirit of Christianity. But for that holy contact I could scarcely have grown into the staunch and sincere Zoroastrian that I am.'

<sup>1</sup> See *Asiatic Studies* (Second Series) (1907), pp. 23, 80, 81, 86.



influence among their Hindu neighbours. This, too, was the opinion entertained by Bishop Heber, who held that in the matter of meals and social intercourse the principle to be followed was that expressed in the text 'For meat and drink destroy not him for whom Christ died'. Bishop Daniel Wilson, however, came to the conclusion that the Church of England could not countenance a non-Christian system which condemned those in the lower ranks to perpetual abasement, placed an immovable barrier against general advance and social improvement, and cut asunder the bonds of human fellowship on the one hand, and prevented those of Christian love on the other. He was fortified in his opinion by the fact, or what he believed to be the fact, that distinctions of caste were not known among converts in Bengal. Accordingly he ruled that the distinctions of caste must be abandoned decidedly, immediately, and finally, as a proof that the old man had been put off and the new man put on in Christ Jesus. Other Protestant missions have taken the same line, holding that the caste system is opposed to the conception of the brotherhood of man and to the commandment 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'.

There can be no doubt that the complete change in social life which is involved by the repudiation of caste has been a stumbling-stone and a rock of offence, especially in South India. It deters many who would otherwise confess the Christian faith from receiving baptism, and it has been a source of constant discord in Christian congregations, so much so that the history of Protestant missions in South India has been described as being largely a history of caste troubles and caste relapses.<sup>1</sup> Caste seems to have an enduring hold, and it may take generations to eliminate it entirely. Of it, as of nature, it may be said: *expellas furca, tamen usque recurrit*. Caste groups are apt to continue, and a ban on intermarriage is often in evidence. An Indian Christian, indeed, goes so far as to say that owing to caste influences the convert finds the Christian community is not a homogeneous community but is divided into castes and parties, mutually exclusive, jealous and inimical.<sup>2</sup> The depressed classes or untouchables have the less objection to renouncing Hinduism and embracing Christianity because by so doing they acquire a higher status. They rise from a life of ignominy and contempt to the position of free men, and in most areas cease to be regarded as untouchables by their Hindu neighbours. Owing to the preponderance in the Christian community of converts from the untouchable castes, Brahmans and other castes deride Christianity as a religion of Pariahs. Its levelling principles

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. J. A. Sharrock, *World Missionary Conference* (1910), vol. ii, p. 370.

<sup>2</sup> See P. N. F. Young and A. Ferraers, *India in Conflict* (1920), p. 134.

are repugnant to caste ideas, and men attracted by its ideals are reluctant to join a body in which they would be on the same level as those from whom they have held aloof from time immemorial.

There has further been a widespread objection to Christianity on the ground that converts become westernized and denationalized, abandoning the social and cultural traditions of India and adopting European manners and dress. Formerly at any rate there was considerable force in this criticism. Missionaries seemed to be anxious to make Indian Christians as English as possible; children in orphanages were dressed, most unbecomingly, in English clothes; converts were given English or biblical names, and aped their pastors and masters in food, dress, and deportment. One Brahman convert of a Scottish mission is known to have said, apparently with some pride, that he was just a dark-skinned Scotsman. As Meredith Townsend remarked, the missionary desired that his flock should become civilized as well as Christian, and he understood no civilization but that of Europe; he had consequently an eye to a false end—the Europeanization of the Asiatic—and acted through the false method of developing the desire of imitation.<sup>1</sup> Prejudice was created by what were considered objectionable habits. The nature of this feeling may be gauged from two expressions of opinion separated *longo intervallo* in time but not in the idea they represent. The first is that of the Rev. J. C. Gangooly, a Brahman who became a Unitarian minister. Writing in 1860, he said:

"The Hindoo's impression of Christianity is this: that in order to become a Christian it is essentially necessary that a young man should treat his parents unkindly, eat animal food, such as beef, pork, ham, &c., which the Hindoos detest, drink wine, not wash his mouth after the meal, as the animals do, and forsake all things which bear the name of Hindoo, however beautiful they are."<sup>2</sup>

With this may be compared the statement made over seventy years later by Professor P. Seshadri that the Indian Christian thought that he must eat meat, wear a hat, begin to drink, and dissociate himself from practically all things Indian.<sup>3</sup> The more discerning are well aware that Christianity must not be judged by manners which form no part of it, but they are in a minority, and popular sentiment associates the religion with practices for which there is a feeling of repugnance. Even Mr. Gandhi, when a young man, had the impression that Christianity compelled men to eat beef, drink liquor, and wear European clothes, and he was repelled by a religion which appeared to him not to deserve its name.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Asia and Europe* (1905), p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> *Life and Religion of the Hindoos* (1860), p. 222.

<sup>3</sup> *Asiatic Review* (1931), p. 466.

<sup>4</sup> C. F. Andrews, *Mahatma Gandhi: His Own Story* (1930), p. 53.



To many who are not influenced by superficial views of this kind Christianity appears in the light of a foreign religion with which they feel no spiritual affinity. Certainly modern Christianity has come to India in a western form owing to the western character of its presentation and modes of expression. The missionaries have been Europeans and Americans whose thoughts are cast in a western mould; the Churches have had a western organization and western denominational divisions; western ecclesiastical architecture has been copied; services and liturgies have reproduced the forms of parent Churches in the West, English hymns and chants being translated and the harmonium used instead of the musical instruments dear to Indians. The outward lives of the ordinary missionaries have, moreover, not conformed to Indian ideas of holy living. A spiritual life should be one of austerity, renunciation, and asceticism; the bearer of a spiritual message should, like the seventy disciples, carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes. Although the piety, devoutness, and altruism of missionaries are admitted, Hindus find it hard to reconcile their high calling with the fact that they draw salaries, however small, from the mission to which they belong, and that they are not a class apart but have much the same outward appurtenances of life—dress, food, houses—as other Europeans. Muscular Christianity again is incomprehensible to the generality of Hindus, who cannot understand how preachers of the gospel can take part in outdoor games such as tennis and hockey.

The Christianity presented to India has accordingly been looked upon as western in spirit and in form, and it has often failed to make an emotional appeal to men who may be intellectually convinced of its principles. Their feelings have been figuratively expressed in the phrase that the Gospel was eastern nectar brought in a western bowl and not palatable on that account, and in the remark that India would accept Christ when he took off his hat, trousers, and boots—a remark which was not intended to be irreverent, but to explain why Indians felt out of sympathy with a creed of which the characteristics seemed western. 'It seems', said the Brahmo Samaj leader Keshab Chandra Sen, 'that the Christ that has come to us is an Englishman, with English manners and customs about him, and with the temper and spirit of an Englishman in him. Hence it is that Hindu people shrink back.' 'When you bring Christ to us, bring him to us not as a civilized European, but as an Asiatic ascetic, whose wealth is communion and whose riches prayers.' The antipathy to Christianity was strengthened by the sentiment of cultural nationalism and by the development of political nationalism. Those who took a natural pride in India's cultural heritage resented the assumption of

superiority revealed, for example, in the words of a popular hymn:

Can we, whose souls are lighted  
With wisdom from on high,  
Can we to men benighted  
The lamp of life deny?

The Christian faith was held to be part and parcel of western civilization, and the racial antipathy felt to the British was extended to their religion. It was given out that it was unpatriotic to read the Bible, and at one time feeling was so exacerbated by political passion that the mention of Christ in a speech delivered in one of the annual meetings of the Indian National Congress caused an uproar which prevented the speaker from continuing. This phase has happily passed away, partly owing to the influence of Mr. Gandhi and the reverence he has shown for the person and teachings of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

There has been for some time past a change in the outlook of missionaries and their method of approach. They are no longer so anxious to westernize converts. The 'beef and bat' idea is out of date. Converts, instead of having English or biblical names, are reverting to Indian names. The charge of denationalization has no longer the same vogue or cogency. The enlistment of many educated Indian Christians in the nationalist cause has brought Hindus of the politically minded class into closer touch with them and created a certain sense of sympathy; a Christian Nationalist party was started in Bombay in 1930. The attitude of the missionaries themselves is very different from that of their predecessors of an earlier generation, many of whom honestly believed that there was no salvation except for members of the Christian Church and that the people of India were benighted heathens, who were doomed to eternal damnation unless they heard the Gospel and, hearing, believed. The approach is now more sympathetic; the truths contained in Hinduism and Islam, and the resemblances or points of contact between them and Christianity, are acknowledged. The feeling is gaining ground that Christianity must be expressed in an Indian form and that missionaries should turn to the Indian scriptures in order to find language by which to interpret Christian teachings. Some go farther, holding that those scriptures will enrich the conception of the Christian doctrines.<sup>2</sup>

The idea that Christianity should not be presented to India merely as a western faith is also apparent in the increasing use of Indian

<sup>1</sup> On one occasion Mr. Gandhi, instead of making the speech which his audience expected, read the beatitudes from the New Testament, and said: "That is my address to you. Act upon that." E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road* (1927), p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. J. C. Winslow and V. Elwin, *The Dawn of Indian Freedom* (1931), p. 205.



music, and it is being given concrete form in the architecture of churches and cathedrals, which are now being designed more on Indian lines and are no longer incongruous copies of western buildings; a good example is the new cathedral at Dornakal. Further, it is being realized to an increasing extent that India must be Christianized by Indians, i.e. that Indian agency must be more and more used for evangelization. With this object the National Missionary Council of India was founded in 1905, and this has since become the National Christian Council of India, of which at least half the membership must be Indian. The tutelage of European missionaries is no longer considered so essential. Missionary bodies are far readier to favour the devolution of their powers and duties to Indian agency and to envisage the advance of the Indian church under Indian leadership. The movement in this direction has been furthered by the spirit of nationalism among Indian Christians, which has created a feeling that they have not been given sufficient influence and responsibility in the Church and that the latter should be freed from foreign domination and control.

Missionaries are becoming more ready to become indianized in their outward manner of life. There are ascetic brotherhoods whose members live a life of self-sacrifice and simplicity conforming to Indian ideas. Members of the Salvation Army and others have followed the example of Commissioner Booth Tucker, who adopted the expressive name of Fakir Singh, wore Indian dress, and from 1881 lived the life of an Indian ascetic, travelling barefooted and begging his food. Again, the Christa Seva Sangha (meaning the society of the servants of Christ), which was founded in 1922, is a community of Englishmen and Indians living together and observing Indian customs, whose object has been defined as interpreting the Christian gospel to India in the utmost possible detachment from the purely British or European elements which tend to cling to the preaching and exposition of it by those whose habits of thought have been moulded by western philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

At one time the Indian Christian community was only too ready to be westernized and there was a revulsion against Indian culture, partly no doubt because of its association with Hinduism,<sup>2</sup> the religion which they had renounced as false. This is no longer the case. Indian Christians are more anxious to remain Indian in their secular life, and they desire to see their Church find Indian forms of expression and develop on Indian lines. There is a growing

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Dr. Howard Somervell tells us that for ten years he tried to introduce Indian music and Indian musical instruments into the church at the place where he worked in a medical mission, but the pastor would have none of them, protesting that they were used in Hindu temple services and were therefore non-Christian. *After Everett* (1936), p. 319.

body of opinion that Christianity should be as truly Indian in India as it is British in Great Britain. One outcome of this feeling is opposition to the sectarianism which splits up western Christendom. Why, asks the Indian Christian, should we be divided by denominational differences which have their origin in the past history of European dogmatism and have little or no meaning for us? There was a resultant movement for the union of Protestant Churches, particularly in South India, where in 1908 the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches amalgamated in the South India United Church, which was joined eleven years later by the churches of the Basel Mission in Malabar.

There is, further, some insistence on the view that Hinduism has its own contribution to make to Christianity. It is pointed out by Indian Christians that Hinduism contains truths, such as the virtue of renunciation and other-worldliness, which are of the very essence of Christianity, but which have become of secondary importance to its western followers, and which Hinduism will help to restore to their proper place. A reinterpretation, they plead, can be given to Christian doctrines by Hindu thought. Western divines should not be the only guides; use should be made of the spiritual concepts contained in the Hindu scriptures. The Upanishads, it has been stated, may be considered a complement to the Gospel and can supplement it as the Old Testament does the New. Hinduism may be both a stepping-stone and an aid to Christianity in India. It is symptomatic of this view that, on the enthronement of the Bishop of Tinnevely in January 1939, the members of the diocesan council and representatives of the congregations of the diocese presented an address to him in which it was stated that there was a growing volume of enlightened opinion that the cultural heritage of India had not been sufficiently appreciated and used, and it was urged that the studies of the local theological college should be so ordered that the religious philosophy and literature of India would play the same part as the writings of western philosophy had in early Christian thought and literature. In this connexion it may be added that Dr. Nicol Macnicol has pointed out that the Marathi Christian poet Narayan Varman Tilak, by bringing together and fusing the Christian message and the Hindu tradition of *Bhakti* or loving devotion, has effected a reconciliation of Christianity and Hinduism, and has brought to the Maratha Church a renaissance not only of religion but of poetry and literature.<sup>1</sup>

Considering the length of the period during which Christian missions have been labouring, the zeal and devotion of their members, and the susceptibility of Indians to a spiritual message,

<sup>1</sup> See *India in the Dark Wood* (1939), pp. 128-31.



it is perhaps somewhat surprising that the Christian Church is not larger than it is, even when allowance is made for the obstacles to evangelization such as the attachment of the people to their religions, the vastness of the field, and the paucity of workers. On the other hand, the influence of Christianity is not to be judged merely by statistical results. It has extended far beyond the circle of the Christian community owing partly to the diffusion of Christian thought by means of the Bible and English literature, partly to the educational, social, and humanitarian work of missions, and partly to the influence of a Christian government. The effects of a system which enabled the people to be governed according to the code of Christian morality are not always fully realized but should not be minimized. The British government, though it rarely advertised the fact, was sustained by Christian ideals. It embodied principles of humanity and justice; it was its constant endeavour to see right triumph and wrongs redressed; within the limits imposed by its policy of religious neutrality it strove to do Christian things in a Christian way. British rule in India, said Lord Curzon, must depend on the eternal moralities of righteousness and justice. 'We are here because Providence has, before all the world, laid a solemn duty upon our shoulders, and that duty is to hold the country by justice and righteousness and good will, and to set an example to its people.'<sup>1</sup>

The social and moral reforms effected by a western system of government have, it is true, not been associated in Indian minds with religious sanctions but have been regarded as more or less secular. Christian thought and principles have been connected not so much with the Christianity of the Churches as with the culture which has come from the West. Few, however, question the value of Christian missions as a force making for intellectual and social progress. They have undertaken humanitarian work of the most varied character and established a tradition of selfless service. They were the pioneers of modern education for women as well as men; their colleges have been centres of creative energy and healthy influence, besides setting up and maintaining high educational standards. The remark of an Indian lady, Dr. Reddi, that in the past Christian missionaries were the only agencies in the field of women's education, which owes more to them than to government itself, has already been quoted in Chapter XIII. They initiated the movement for the uplift of the untouchables, and steadfastly endeavoured to combine their economic and industrial interests with their spiritual and social reclamation. They have given medical relief in hospitals and dispensaries, and set up special institutions for lepers and tuberculous patients; they have

<sup>1</sup> Sir T. Raleigh, *Lord Curzon in India* (1906), pp. 45, 553-4.

established industrial schools, schools for the blind and for the deaf and dumb, and homes for widows and orphans; assisted in rural reconstruction; organized welfare centres, co-operative societies, and agricultural settlements; reclaimed criminal tribes—a special feature of the work of the Salvation Army and the Belgian Franciscan brothers—and have been a means of civilizing some of the aboriginal tribes, to whom they have been friends and counsellors and a present help in trouble.

The indirect results of Christianity and its spiritual and ethical influence are apparent in many directions, though they cannot be expressed in definite formulae. The chief modern movements of reform within Hinduism have been affected by contact with Christianity, though in very different ways. Its influence was first reflected in the Brahmo Samaj with its conception of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men, its ideas of social reform, particularly as regards caste and the position of women, and its high ethical standards. Its founder, Raja Ram Mohan Ray, confessed that he found the doctrines of Christ more conducive to moral principles and better adapted for the use of rational beings than any which had come to his knowledge during long years of research into religious truth. He published a volume of excerpts under the significant title of *The Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness*, and the ethics of the body which he founded were substantially Christian in spirit. Although, however, it was sympathetic to Christianity, the Brahmo Samaj was fundamentally a Hindu movement. Just as Luther took his stand on the Bible as the ultimate authority and denounced the corruption of medieval priestcraft which found no place in it, so Ram Mohan Ray appealed against the authority of the Brahmans to the authority of the Vedas, denounced the abuses which had crept into Hinduism, and sought to restore it to its early form.

The Arya Samaj was another movement which based its programme of reform on the ancient Hindu scriptures, but, unlike the Brahmo Samaj, it was frankly and avowedly antagonistic to Christianity. As is explained by one of its exponents, its object was to protect Hinduism from the polemical attacks of Christian missionaries, from the inroads of the religion of the ruling race, and from the undermining influence of a system of education which left its recipients ignorant of the best of their own religion.<sup>1</sup> It was designed not only to withstand the attacks of Christianity but also to launch a counter-attack on it. It accordingly assumed an aggressive and proselytizing form—a new development in Hinduism, which appears never to have been an active missionary religion deliberately organized to convert the followers of other

<sup>1</sup> Professor S. N. Pherwani in *Religions of the Empire* (1925), pp. 301-2.



systematized religions, though it undoubtedly absorbed aboriginal tribes with animistic cults and incoherent and inarticulate beliefs. For this purpose the Arya Samaj took up weapons forged in the West and paid missionaries the sincerest form of flattery by imitating their methods, sending out missionaries and lecturers, having choirs to sing hymns—one is said to have been a translation of the Anglican hymn 'Lead, kindly Light'—distributing tracts, establishing colleges, schools, and orphanages, and undertaking social service work. Social service is also a prominent feature of the work of the Ramakrishna Mission. According to its own statement, its 'scheme of uplift' for the regeneration of the depressed classes in Cochin is inspired by the experiences of the American negro, Booker T. Washington, founder of the Tuskegee Institute.

'The recognition of the principle of the brotherhood of man', says the Bishop of Dornakal, himself an Indian, 'the new conception of the worth and freedom of the individual, the acknowledgement of the truth of the nobility of service, are entirely foreign to all Hindu life and practice. Every reform has sprung directly or indirectly from Christian teaching and example.'<sup>1</sup> The idea of social service is certainly derived, in part at least, from the principles of Christianity and their application in practice by its followers. A contributory factor is the spirit of nationalism, which may be said to be typified by the vow of the Servants of India to devote themselves to the service of their country and to regard all Indians as brothers. A further impulse has been given by the feeling of national honour and the desire to win the respect of other nations by undertaking humanitarian work and not leaving it to be done by foreigners to the shame and reproach of India. Many active workers in the social cause have been ardent Hindu nationalists, who have been filled with a passionate spirit of self-sacrifice and have tended the sick and suffering during epidemics of plague, cholera, and malaria, succoured the distressed in the calamities caused by floods and earthquakes, and even carried corpses to the funeral pyre, regardless of caste inhibitions. The combined result of the influence of Christianity and the strong motive force of nationalism has been to spread abroad a new doctrine of humanity and individual responsibility, a consciousness of social duty transcending the social group such as the family and caste. With many social service has become an ideal, replacing the old Indian ideal of the ascetic who renounces the world. The Chairman of the reception committee of the Indian National Congress declared in 1936: 'Every individual must be taught to realize that the fulfilment of individual existence can only be sought through the increasing pursuit of social well-being.'

<sup>1</sup> W. Paton, *Social Ideals in India* (1919), p. 59.

There is a new angle of vision among the more educated and advanced towards such questions as the caste system, the emancipation and education of women, the remarriage of widows, polygamy, and child marriage. Sympathies have expanded and there has been a practical outcome of the spirit of service in organized movements and individual efforts of an altruistic character for the improvement of the lot of the depressed classes, rural reconstruction, the prevention of disease, and the relief of suffering. There are 'flag-days' galore for the collection of funds for good causes and 'weeks' of various kinds for the education of public opinion. Since 1920 there has been an Indian Red Cross Society which has many hundreds of groups. There are 450 in Madras alone, where the Society, in addition to other work, employs health visitors and maintains a blood-transfusion service in co-operation with the Indian Toc H. A junior Red Cross movement has been started for work among the young, and social service is part of the activities of many schools. To mention one instance, a high school in Coimbatore has a social service league and a junior Red Cross group, which does welfare work both in slums and villages, and has started what is called 'a summer adult literacy campaign' for the education of adults, groups of volunteers, each under a teacher, bicycling out to different villages and holding classes in sheds, verandas, and back-yards of schools, &c., every day for a month. The Boy Scouts movement has been taken up whole-heartedly both in British India and the States; in the Punjab, where there are 60,000 boy scouts, it is said that almost every school has its troop;<sup>1</sup> in Bombay the number of scouts, rovers, cubs, &c., is 46,000; in Mysore 13,000 have been enrolled. The Girl Guides movement, though handicapped by the paucity of women to take charge of it, is making progress. Mention too may be made of a Muslim organization recently founded in the Punjab under the name of Khaksars (meaning humble as the dust), whose implement is the spade and whose members have done useful social service. It appears, however, to be modelled on the Hitler Youth of Germany, and social work has been subsidiary to political activities.

The advance to a more spiritual creed which has taken place during the last hundred years may also be ascribed, with some justification, to contact with Christianity. It is not intended to suggest that lofty spiritual conceptions are not inherent in Hinduism, both in its esoteric and exoteric forms, with their conceptions of pantheism and theism, of divine immanence and transcendence. Even in popular Hinduism, with its admixture of polytheism, idolatry, and animism, there is in the background a belief in a

<sup>1</sup> *Education in India in 1935-6*, Report of the Educational Commission with the Government of India (Delhi, 1938), p. 89.



supreme being, to be worshipped in all his different forms and manifestations, in God, one and infinite, the remembrance of whom, as Max Müller said, breaks through the mist of an idolatrous phraseology like the blue sky that is hidden by passing clouds. There are from time to time little known, spontaneous movements which raise thought and conduct to a high level; to give one instance, a Yogi, unknown to fame, who appeared in the Nellore district of Madras early in the nineteenth century, taught that there is one God, and he is Spirit, forbade the worship of idols, discountenanced caste, and gave his followers an ethical code similar to the Christian code. Such movements, however, are apt to be ephemeral and either to die out, or to be obscured by the grosser forms of popular Hinduism, on the death of their founders. Generally speaking, it would seem that before Hinduism came into contact with Christianity its higher spiritual conceptions were more implicit than explicit and that though they were familiar to a certain number of seekers after truth, they were but dimly perceived and imperfectly realized by the generality. It was contact with Christianity, and the desire to rise to its plane of spiritual thought, that brought them into prominence and quickened Hinduism to a new life in which fuller expression was given to them. One other result of the contact has been the adoption of Christian ideas and language in the interpretation of Hinduism and Islam to the outside world. Partly no doubt because they are intended for a western public, some apologetics are so infused by Christian thought, and use Christian phraseology to such an extent, that they minimize and obscure the essential differences between their doctrines and those of the Christian creed.

The Christian ethic has also been, to a large extent, accepted and grafted on to Hinduism by many of the more highly educated and reflective members of the community, who are in sympathy with the Christian code of morals though out of sympathy with its theological dogmas. Here again it must be pointed out that the Hindu scriptures and literature contain sentiments and expressions of a high ethical character, enjoining piety, austerity, self-discipline, unselfishness, &c., and harmonizing with those of Christianity; though it might be contended that in Hinduism ethics are part of a philosophy rather than of a religion and that rules of conduct are not enjoined by a moral code as in Christianity. Hinduism, it has been said, has never succeeded, as Christianity has done, in so limiting and formulating religious thought as to evolve a system of unified beliefs that are infallible rules of faith and that can also be explained as moral ordinances.<sup>1</sup> Higher Hinduism is concerned more with the mysteries of the spirit, and

<sup>1</sup> Sir A. Lyall, *Asiatic Studies* (Second Series) (1907), p. 94.

popular Hinduism with ceremonial observances, than with ethics. Both alike fully recognize and inculcate the moral virtues, but right conduct is not dictated by a categorical imperative, so that religion supplies little stimulus or discipline in moral life.

However this may be, it was contact with Christianity which directed attention to the ethical principles of Hinduism. The latter was examined from a new angle and became, so to speak, moralized, often by a process which is described in the following words of a shrewd Hindu observer: 'Christianity has given us Christ and taught us noble moral and spiritual lessons, which we have rediscovered in our own scriptures, and thereby satisfied our own self-love and made them our very own.'<sup>1</sup> Whatever the process, whether by conscious or unconscious adaptation, Christian sentiment has become naturalized among the more highly educated classes to such an extent that it is scarcely realized that it is not entirely an indigenous growth. Although there is no belief in Christ's divinity, and although higher Hinduism is associated more with principles than with persons, Christ's life is regarded by those who know of it as approaching the ideal, and Christian values and standards of conduct are given frank admiration. 'If', said one of the Ministers of Cochin in 1938, 'men loved one another in the spirit in which Christ wished them to, they would evolve an ideal society.'<sup>2</sup> The not infrequent description of Mr. Gandhi as Christ-like is in itself significant of the appreciation of the spirit and teachings of Christ, of which perhaps an equally typical expression is a remark made by a thoughtful Hindu to Dr. Stanley Jones of the American Methodist Episcopal Church: 'If you call one of us a Christian man, he is complimented; but if you call him a Christian, he is insulted.'<sup>3</sup> The Bible is studied and quoted; speeches and newspaper articles show remarkable familiarity with its contents. It must obviously not be inferred from this that there is a background of belief, but there can be no doubt that there is appreciation of the spiritual force of which Christianity is the expression. Its ideals are gaining ground, and in recent times no one perhaps has done more to this end than Mr. Gandhi.<sup>4</sup>

Looking at the diffusion of Christian thought among the intelli-

<sup>1</sup> R. S. Wilson, *The Indirect Effects of Christian Missions in India* (1928), p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> *The Madras Mail* of 25 October 1938.

<sup>3</sup> *The Christ of the Indian Road* (1927), p. 130. Presumably the latter part of this remark has its origin in the uncongenial implications of Christianity referred to on a previous page.

<sup>4</sup> In reply to an address of welcome presented to him at the National Eucharistic Conference held at Madras in December 1937, the Papal Legate pointed out that Mr. Gandhi's ideals had many affinities with Christian ethics, and that he had assimilated some of the most important moral teachings of Christianity. He went on to say that outside the Church no one perhaps had echoed more eloquently the Church's appeal to Christian ethics.



gentsia some are inclined to think that India may become Christian in spirit, though not in name, and express the belief that a process of conversion is already in operation, which is manifested not by a change of professed faith, but by a change of heart. There has long been a tendency in this direction among advanced Hindus. As early as 1874 the Brahmo Samaj leader, Keshab Chandra Sen, avowed his belief that though the Son of Man, the son of God in Christ, was not needful for salvation, the spirit of Christ, of faith, love, righteousness, and self-sacrifice, must be accepted. 'We do not care to believe in the outward and dead Nazarene, or make a declaration of such belief in an orthodox style. But we do care to assimilate the spirit of Christ to our souls.' The New Dispensation which he founded was, he claimed, a new type of Hinduism which combined *Yoga* (asceticism) and *Bhakti* (devotion) but at the same time strove to absorb and assimilate the spirit of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

The movement in this direction has spread beyond the circle of the Brahmo Samaj. In 1901 the Rev. C. F. Andrews pointed to the change which was being effected by silent processes of the spirit and stated that his missionary experiences led him more and more to regard the conversion of India not as the aggregate of so many individual conversions but far rather as a gradual process of growth and change in thought, idea, feeling, temperament, and conduct.<sup>2</sup> Two years later Sir Narayan G. Chandravarkar, a judge of the Bombay High Court and a leader in movements of social reform, went so far as to express the opinion that India was being converted, as the ideas that lie at the heart of the gospel of Christ were slowly but surely permeating every part of Hindu society and modifying every phase of Hindu thought.<sup>3</sup> According to an Indian Christian writer, the tests of Christian values are applied tacitly, even unconsciously, to the vast stores of Hindu thought and experience, and there is a tacit recognition of them as the supreme criterion for all human conduct, public and private. 'The process is so widespread, and is so effectively and continuously operative, that it must be characterized as a movement.'<sup>4</sup> This movement has led Dr. Stanley Jones to state in one passage of his book *The Christ of the Indian Road* that the spiritual atmosphere in India is becoming saturated with Christ's thoughts and is heavy to the point of precipitation into Christian forms and expressions, and in another that Hinduism is gradually evolving and changing into Christianity without losing its good points. It must, however, not be forgotten that, with the trend to Christian thought, there has been a trend to agnosticism and to a form of secularism which denies spiritual

<sup>1</sup> See Max Müller, *Biographical Essays* (1884), pp. 75-7, 117.

<sup>2</sup> *The Indian Interpreter*, November 1909.

<sup>3</sup> J. N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (1919), p. 445.

<sup>4</sup> K. T. Paul, *The British Connection with India* (1927), pp. 30-1.

sanctions. There is a section of the intelligentsia, by no means negligible either in numbers or in influence, which displays either a passive indifference to all religion or a positive hostility to it as the child and parent of superstition; and it has been suggested that the time has come when a United Christian Front should be formed to oppose the subversive forces of atheism and communistic ideas which, it is said, are being spread by propaganda among the masses.

#### WOMEN

Education has been one of the most potent influences which have been brought to bear on modern India, but it is an influence which has affected men far more than women. Until comparatively recent times few men wanted education for their wives and daughters, fewer women wanted it for themselves. Ignorance, except in religion, legendary lore, and domestic matters, was regarded as a woman's natural lot. Efforts first to introduce education and then to extend it have been made for over a century, and not without success, but in spite of this the proportion of the female population able to read and write is only 2 per cent. Even among the classes whose men have received an English education, and have so been brought into touch with western thought, the majority of women have not, only three in a thousand being able to read and write English.

'To the Hindoo female all education is denied by the positive injunction of the shastru<sup>1</sup> and by the general voice of the population. Not a single school for girls, therefore, all over the country. With knitting, sewing, embroidery, painting, music, and drawing they have no more to do than with letters.'<sup>2</sup> In these words the Baptist missionary, William Ward, summed up the state of female education in 1821. His remarks applied primarily to the part of India which he knew, Bengal, but were equally true of other parts of India. School education for girls was scarcely dreamt of except in the Punjab. The first administration report of the Board of Administration (1849-51) pointed out that it was remarkable that female education, which was still 'almost unknown in other parts of India', was to be met with in all parts of the Punjab. There were even female teachers, and the pupils, whose number was not large, were drawn from all the communities, Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh. Education is not merely a matter of instruction in schools, though the modern tendency is to treat the two as identical, but there was

<sup>1</sup> *Sastras*. 'It was', wrote Shib Chunder Bose, 'worse than blasphemy to educate a female; she was born in ignorance, she must die in ignorance.' *Hindoots as they are* (Calcutta, 1883), p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> Farewell letter on returning to Bengal in 1821, G. Smith, *Life of William Carey* (1922), p. 53.



little home education. A few far-seeing parents among the landed classes had their daughters taught reading, writing, and accounts in order to prevent unscrupulous relatives or managers taking advantage of their ignorance in the event of widowhood. Prostitutes also learnt to read and write, dance, and sing in order to enhance their charms, but neither mental culture nor the attainment of such accomplishments was desirable for virtuous women. Any *rara avis* who learnt to write was careful to conceal the fact from fear of imputations on her modesty. Even as late as 1881 the census returns of literacy were vitiated by this belief. Respectable women, who were in fact able to read and write, when asked if they could do so, replied in the negative because it was not considered respectable for a woman to write though her ability to read would be no blot on her character.<sup>1</sup>

The history of women's education differs widely from that of the opposite sex. In the pre-British days boys had opportunities both for elementary and for higher education. In the case of girls there were no facilities and no demand for any. A demand had to be created. The first tentative steps in this direction were taken by missionaries and English ladies. In 1818 Mr. Forsyth of the London Missionary Society opened a little girls' school at Chinsura, the Dutch settlement on the river Hooghly, but this had scant success. Next, in response to an appeal made by the Baptist missionaries in the following year, a number of English ladies founded a society bearing the unprepossessing designation of the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society, but after 5 years this had only six schools with 160 pupils under its management. The result of inquiries made by the Calcutta School Society was to show that only 400 women out of an estimated total of 40 millions could read and write. Opinion in Great Britain was shocked by this revelation. The British and Foreign School Society took the matter up and in 1821 sent out a lady to organize schools, Miss Cooke (Mrs. Wilson after her marriage). Within two years she succeeded in establishing 23 girls' schools, with an average of 25 to 30 girls in each, in Calcutta and the surrounding villages. This was no mean achievement. Writing in that year Bishop Heber said that the idea of sending Hindu girls to school, where they would run the risk of mixing with girls of other castes, had at first been regarded in about the same light as it would be in England to send a girl to Sadler's Wells to learn tumbling and rope-dancing.<sup>2</sup> What is perhaps even more remarkable than the number of schools and scholars was the friendly interest taken in them by some of the leaders of Hindu

<sup>1</sup> *Census of India Report for 1881*, vol. i, p. 254.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of 16 November 1823 to the Dean of St. Asaph. *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India* (1849), vol. ii, p. 189.

society, one of whom gave in 1826 the sum of Rs. 20,000 (£2,000) for the construction of a central school, which became the nucleus of Mrs. Wilson's activities. The initiative, however, still came mostly from missionary bodies and English philanthropists. In 1824 a Ladies' Society for Native Female Education was constituted in Calcutta; ten years later the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East was formed in England. The credit of the first organized effort to educate girls in West India belongs to an American missionary society, which opened an Indian girls' school in Bombay in 1824, and in South India to the missionaries of the Scottish Church.

Until the close of the first half of the nineteenth century female education was the child of no one but the missionaries. Indians, except for a small number belonging to the lower orders, did not send their daughters to mission schools; few started schools themselves. The attitude of government was that of Gallio; there was a State-aided system for boys but none for girls. The united efforts of two men, Lord Dalhousie and Drinkwater Bethune, Law Member of the Government of India, set matters on a new footing. As stated in Chapter XIII, the latter in 1849 founded a school in Calcutta for the education of the daughters of Indians of wealth and rank; on his death two years later Dalhousie defrayed its cost from his own pocket until he left India. It was subsequently taken over by government and developed into a college, the Bethune College, which was the first institution for the higher education of women. Bethune was also responsible for female education receiving State support. It was at his instance that Lord Dalhousie, as Governor of Bengal, instructed the Bengal Council of Education (of which Bethune was the unpaid President) to extend its functions to the superintendence of Indian female education and, where any disposition was shown by Indians to establish girls' schools, to give it all possible encouragement.

Sir Charles Wood's great dispatch on educational policy pointed out in admirable terms that the importance of female education could not be over-rated and that 'by this means a far greater proportional impulse is imparted to the educational and moral tone of the people than by the education of men'. In spite, however, of its importance and moral value, only one out of one hundred paragraphs was devoted to the subject; nothing was said about government establishing and maintaining girls' schools, and it was not till many years later that it did so. Nor can this be wondered at. Those who wanted education wanted it for their boys, and not for their girls. In the evidence which she gave before the Education Commission in 1882 Pandita Ramabai remarked that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the educated men of the



country were opposed to female education and the proper position of women. The funds available were all too small. It was little use to build schools without girls to fill them or a staff of female teachers; and the teaching profession for women was thought to be incompatible with womanly modesty. Besides all this, government feared that if it took the initiative, it would alarm the great body of conservative opinion, which would misconstrue its action and attribute to it sinister intentions.

As is pointed out in Chapter XIII, the first Indians to take an active interest in the subject were the communities which were closest in touch with western thought, the Parsis in the west of India and the Brahmo Samaj in the east; a special feature of the work of the latter was propaganda by means of newspapers, of which one was founded and another was edited by ladies. A movement was started to which a further stimulus was given by the well-known philanthropist Miss Mary Carpenter, in whose epitaph it is stated that 'taking to heart the grievous lot of oriental women, in the last decade of her life she four times went to India and awakened an active interest in their education and training for serious purposes'.<sup>1</sup> The movement began to spread among the upper and middle classes. In 1879 we find a cultured Brahman lady touring Bengal with her brother, preaching the cause of women's education and emancipation at public meetings, and exciting wonder and admiration by her knowledge of Sanskrit. Optimists ventured to predict that, so far as the upper classes were concerned, the women of the next generation would be completely educated, unlike those of the last generation who were mostly uneducated, and those of the rising generation who were only partly educated. The government gave some hesitating encouragement to the movement, but the official view was that the matter was a delicate one, and any undue haste might, by rousing opposition, cause retrogression instead of progress.<sup>2</sup>

Government had, however, established 1,000 girls' schools by 1875, and the total under instruction was 72,000 five years later; there was still only one girl to every 25 boys at school. Subsequent progress was slow and hesitant; but the pace has been accelerated during the present century, and some of the leeway has been made up. The number of girls in educational institutions of all kinds rose from a little under a million in 1911-12 to 2½ millions in 1931-2; it is now nearly three millions—only 2 per cent., however, of the

<sup>1</sup> These visits were made between 1866 and 1876. Miss Carpenter had long been in touch with members of the Brahmo Samaj, beginning with Raja Ram Mohan Ray and ending with Keshab Chandra Sen, in co-operation with whom she founded the National Indian Association in 1870 in order to promote a better understanding of India by England and of England by India.

<sup>2</sup> See Sir R. Temple, *India in 1880* (1881), p. 155.

female population. Progress has been particularly marked in Madras, where the problem is not complicated by the purdah system. Here over 2,000 new schools for girls were opened between 1927 and 1932, and the addition in the number of girls under instruction was greater than in the case of boys.

The disparity between the sexes has been reduced, the proportion of those at school being one girl to every five boys in British India. The majority, however, do not go beyond the elementary stage and are only half educated as they are withdrawn from their studies at an early age in order to be married. Some communities and some areas are far more advanced than others. In Malabar, Cochin, and Travancore there is approximately one literate female to every two literate males; in Coorg and Baroda the ratio is one to every three. Among the Parsis, that enlightened community whose courteous manners and philanthropy have earned for them the names of the Parisians of the East and the good Samaritans of the East, and whose high level of culture entitles them to be called the Athenians of the East, 78 per cent. of the women are literate and they are nearly on a level with the men (85 per cent.). Among the Vaidyas of Bengal again the percentage of literate females is 48, among the Nayars of South India it is 28, among the Brahmans it is 21 in Bengal, 23 in Bombay, 28 in Madras, Cochin, and Travancore, and 34 in Mysore. Women have also some brilliant achievements to their credit in the field of higher education, but a swallow maketh not summer, and the intellectual attainments of a few highly gifted persons do not compensate for the ignorance of the many, though they may show what the latter are capable of.

Writing in 1879, Sir Monier Monier-Williams deplored the fact that 100 millions of women were sunk in ignorance, unable to read a syllable of their mother tongue, ignorant of the laws of health, and unacquainted with the most rudimentary truths of science.<sup>1</sup> The number is now even greater—over 150 millions are illiterate—as the efforts to promote female education have been outstripped by the increase of population. The great mass of the rural population, living by agriculture and manual labour, has not yet been awakened to the advantages of education for boys. In the case of girls there is a feeling of aversion from it. It is neither an end in itself nor justified by utilitarian considerations, for there are no material benefits to be expected from it, and it is not necessary as a qualification for employment. It is opposed to the traditional ideas of a woman's part in life, viz. the bearing of children, the care of the family, and the management of the house—functions very much the same as the *Küche, Kinder, Kirche* of the German woman.

<sup>1</sup> *Modern India and the Indians* (1879), p. 316.



Mental development is held to be unnecessary or positively inimical to their discharge. Those who take a wider view are faced with the practical difficulties caused by early marriage, which makes it necessary for girls to be taken away from school before they acquire anything more than the rudiments of learning. A vicious circle is created by this custom; early marriage prevents the acquisition of knowledge, and ignorance, together with religious belief as to its necessity, is largely responsible for child marriage. It is among those sections of the community which have given it up and have also discarded the purdah system that female education has made most progress.

Among women themselves one of the greatest enemies of education has been Mrs. Grundy and the conventional ideas of propriety she represents. It has had to contend both against prejudice and against superstition, as in the idea which associates mental and artistic culture with immorality, as well as the belief, which has been perhaps an even more potent deterrent, that a woman who learns to read and write is doomed to premature widowhood.<sup>1</sup>

'Were the history of the progress of female education in India to be written, it would contain many stories of schools almost deprived of scholars owing to one of them becoming a widow and the old women pointing to her as a certain instance of the displeasure of the gods falling upon her and her family for departing from their time-honoured customs.'<sup>2</sup>

The barriers erected by prejudice are, however, breaking down before the forces of progress. The demand for education is growing with the increase in the number of educated young men. The parents who select their sons' brides are beginning to regard knowledge as a desirable qualification, no less than a rich dowry or a 'wheat-coloured' skin. Its diffusion is urged in the national interest, for the sake of the nation as a whole as well as for the sake of women themselves; it is claimed that the education of women is a more effectual means of serving the national interest than that of men. When, it is said, you educate a woman, you educate a whole household, for though sons may acquiesce in their mothers being illiterate, no educated mother will allow her children to remain uneducated. Instead therefore of indifference or dis-

<sup>1</sup> This popular belief can be traced for a whole century. It was mentioned in 1838 by Adam in his report on vernacular education in Bengal and Bihar, in 1860 by Joguth Chunder Gangoolley in *Life and Religion of the Hindoos* (p. 26), in 1878 by Monier-Williams in *Modern India and the Indians* (p. 316), in 1883 by Shib Chunder Bose in *The Hindoos as they are* (p. 222), and in 1926 by Mrs. Urquhart in *Women of Bengal* (p. 117).

<sup>2</sup> J. Wilkins, *Modern Hinduism* (1887), p. 374.

approval, female education meets with approval from those who have the direction of public affairs, though the actual support which it receives is not so active and practical as could be desired. The recommendation of the Hartog Committee that priority should be given to its claims in all schemes of educational expansion<sup>1</sup> has yet to be implemented. It is still a Cinderella, having a secondary place to boys' education in the allotment of funds, and there is a grave educational lag.

Owing to their general lack of education the quickening stream of progress failed for a long time to move the still and stagnant waters of women's life. Upholders of the old régime and repositories of its traditions, they opposed the forces of change. The zenanas were strongholds of obscurantism. Men might reject but women clung to Brahmanical authority as a guide of life. The Brahmanical doctrine that marriage is indissoluble by death was set aside by an Act legalizing the remarriage of widows, but they refused to take advantage of its provisions. Movements for the removal of restrictions on their liberty of action received little support from them. The efforts of men who wished their women-kind to come out of purdah were frustrated by the women themselves. They might be induced to do so on a special occasion; for example, some sixty years ago thousands of purdah ladies, carefully shepherded, visited a great exhibition in Calcutta, and optimistic Hindus expressed the opinion that if the exhibition continued to be open for a year, those who had tasted the sweets of liberty would no longer be content to be immured, and the doors of the zenana would be thrown open. But the hope that women would be the agents of their own emancipation was doomed to disappointment; the flicker caused by a temporary excitement soon died out. Till the end of the nineteenth century the institution of purdah was scarcely shaken. Among those classes which observed it comparatively few, mostly belonging to advanced sections of the upper classes, ventured out of the zenana. According to Mr. S. M. Maitra, it was not till 1866 that Bengali ladies appeared in public, the first to do so being one of the Tagore family.<sup>2</sup> Miss Cornelia Sorabji tells us that in 1904 and for some years afterwards she was the only Indian lady who appeared at English dinner parties in Calcutta.<sup>3</sup>

There has been an extraordinary change during the present

<sup>1</sup> *Interim Report of the Indian Statutory Commission* (1929), p. 183. In the report of the Educational Commissioner on education in India in 1925-6 it is stated that local bodies, which are mainly responsible for primary education, are more vocal than generous in their support of girls' education, and that the percentage of government expenditure on the latter fell from 13.9 to 13.5 per cent. 'Almost everywhere', he concludes, 'female education seems to have been neglected in favour of the education of males.'

<sup>2</sup> *Indian Problems* (1908), p. 390.

<sup>3</sup> *India Calling* (1934), pp. 173-4.



century, which is the result of a combination of causes, such as the extension of higher education of a western type, with an increasing number of girls entering universities in India and Great Britain, and then taking up various professions such as teaching and medicine, the greater freedom of social intercourse in cities and perhaps even more in health resorts, and, generally, what may be called the spirit of the age, caused by the spread of western influences and ideas of personal freedom. The greatest impetus, however, has come from the spirit of nationalism. This penetrated the walls of the zenana; many a purdah woman became an ardent nationalist and, though condemned herself to inaction, stirred her menfolk into action. The call of Mr. Gandhi for active help from women in his campaign appealed at once to their nationalism and to the spirit of selfless devotion which is characteristic of the best type of Indian women. They came out of purdah in thousands, and thousands have remained out of it. The number of women who now appear in public, who attend social gatherings, and who go to cinemas, theatres, and restaurants in cities and towns causes amazement to persons of an earlier generation. There are great public gatherings of emancipated women which would have been unthinkable twenty years ago, e.g. the All-India Women's Conference of 1938 was attended by 4,000 delegates, who not only worked, but also ate, together, regardless of caste distinctions, the only difference at meals being that there were separate tables for vegetarians and non-vegetarians. Some look forward to a general release of women and to the extinction of the purdah system in the near future; the head of the Education Department in Hyderabad, for one, estimates that it will be dead in another decade.<sup>1</sup> Those women who have abandoned it are eager advocates of reform, and some would not wait for the gradual education of opinion, but point to the object-lesson of State action in Turkey and would have the legislature abolish it by a stroke of the pen.

The extent of emancipation must not be exaggerated any more than the prevalence of purdah, which except among Muslims is practically unknown in the south of India,<sup>2</sup> is comparatively slight in the Maratha country, and is not practised by the agricultural and labouring classes unless they belong to higher castes such as the Rajputs. Emancipation is in evidence chiefly in urban centres and among the educated classes, in other words among a minority.

<sup>1</sup> B. Mathews, *India Reveals Herself* (1937), p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> The Abbé Dubois pointed out in 1820 that there was perhaps no kind of honest employment in which Hindu females in South India had not a due share. Wives and daughters assisted in the labours of agriculture and in the carrying on of trade and commerce. Many women were shopkeepers on their own account, and even though they had no knowledge of the alphabet, kept their accounts in excellent order and were considered shrewder than the males in commercial dealings.

It is rather a class movement than a mass movement. *Purdah* is still supported by a great mass of conservative opinion, being one of the insignia of social honour among Hindus, while it is looked on in the light of a religious obligation by many, if not the majority of Muslims. The prestige attached to it leads the lower classes among the former to ape their social superiors, if they can afford to do so; *purdah* is often the privilege of the well-to-do because it adds to the cost of living owing to the need of separate apartments and of withdrawing women from work in the fields. Many Muslims are debarred from adopting it on this account; their poverty but not their will consents to what is felt to be a plain dereliction of duty, but they are only too ready to seclude their women as soon as their means permit. Even among the rural masses, however, feeling on the subject is changing owing to economic stress and the education of opinion. *Purdah* has begun to be a debatable question; villagers discuss the arguments for and against it; peasant women begin to talk of giving it up, and some want to do so. It is objected to by many as either an economic waste, or as injurious to health, or both. It is argued that it would be better for women's health and it would reduce the cost of labour if they were free to work in the fields. Those again who are averse from a breach with custom and religious sentiment are considering whether the stringency of the system can be relaxed, e.g. whether women need be confined within four walls or can go abroad closely veiled, and whether the whole person must be shrouded or whether propriety will be satisfied if only their faces are veiled.

Even more remarkable perhaps than the partial disappearance of *purdah*, which had now been in progress for some time, has been the recent entry of women into politics, which was so sudden as to be almost spectacular. The demand for equal rights came from women in touch with western thought, whose desire was to be placed on an equal footing with their sisters in the West. The formulation of such a demand and its ready acceptance by men were a striking proof of the effect of the repercussion of western ideas on India. Their right to enfranchisement was scarcely questioned by the men with whom lay the power to grant or refuse it. *Prima facie*, their consent to such an innovation was an extraordinary concession considering the almost ingrained view of the subordinate position of women and of their proper functions in life. The politically minded class has, however, always shown a singular facility for adopting the latest and most advanced political theories of the West, and, in addition to this, there was the ambition to keep pace with western countries in the path of progress and to vindicate India in the eyes of the western world. The result was that the women of India acquired as a free gift a right



which the women of Great Britain gained after years of struggle and a good deal of hysterical agitation.

Another recent and remarkable development is a woman's movement, initiated and led by women, which is devoted to the cause of women. In the nineteenth century it was chiefly men who started movements for their education and the removal of the abuses directly affecting them. Now women have come to the front and have organized a movement for the amelioration of the conditions under which they live, not by political action only but also by the education of public opinion. A practical programme of constructive reform has been drawn up, which includes such diverse matters as education (the 'key of progress'), the abolition of the purdah system, maternity and child welfare, and the many activities covered by the term social service. The home and the health of mothers and children are the first considerations, but economic and social independence by the amendment of the laws relating to inheritance, marriage, and divorce is also aimed at.

The chief motive forces have been a humanitarian sympathy for the poor, helpless, and inarticulate and an active spirit of nationalism. Feminism and nationalism have gone hand in hand. Women have begun to feel that they have a special part to play in nation-building and that, as Nelson said before the battle of the Baltic, 'as the thing is necessary to be done, the more difficulties, the more necessary to remove them'. Women, it was said by Lady Mirza Ismail Khan at the Mysore State Women's Conference of 1938, are making their demands not from a small-minded desire merely to secure rights, but from a consciousness of their mission to assist in the uplift of their country. 'It is the consciousness of our duties that makes us desire our rights.' As Mrs. Gray says in Chapter XIII, contact with the West has brought them a new conception of themselves as individually important and nationally needed. The movement is avowedly intended to create a nation in which women will be equal partners of men, which will be free from abuses which sap its strength, and which will be able to hold up its head among modern civilized nations. The values which are accepted and the standards which are aimed at are those of the modern West though they are commonly represented as those of ancient India; to quote a characteristic expression of this point of view, 'it is not so much the establishment of a new order or a new convention but rather a revival and a regaining of a lost glory, though with a distinct desire and attempt to adjust it in concord with modern conditions.'<sup>1</sup>

Although the women's movement is primarily devoted to the

<sup>1</sup> Srimati Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya in *Women in Modern India* (Bombay, 1929), p. 4.

cause of women, there are many women who are as much concerned as men with questions which affect the community as a whole and its general well-being. A certain number are prominent in politics; one has been president of the National Congress; two more were delegates to the Round Table Conference. Effort is organized not for political ends alone but for various forms of public and social service. Quiet useful work is being done by many who have a sense of civic responsibility, as in the Women's Civic Group in Madras, which for some years past has directed its attention to such practical matters as housing, water-supply, sanitation, markets, parks, and playgrounds.

The changes which have already taken place and which are now in progress are regarded by Indians as revolutionary. 'If', wrote Mr. K. Natarajan in 1937, 'a person who died a hundred years ago came to life to-day, the first and most important change that would strike him is the revolution in the position of women.'<sup>1</sup> Their emancipation arouses very different sentiments among the more conservative and the more progressive sections of the community. The former fear that it will involve the loosening of social ties and moral bonds. Female virtue is looked on as a doubtful quality. If it is to be maintained, it must be cloistered; freedom would be fatal to it. Men are fire and women tow, and for the sake of safety, they had better be kept separate. 'Our women', said a soldier to Sir Malcolm Darling, 'are not safe abroad; we have not yet so much education that we can look on a woman unmoved.'<sup>2</sup> It may be objected that what the soldier said is not evidence, but the remark serves to illustrate a common point of view; incidentally, it is a naïve acknowledgement of the moral value of the modern system of education, which is so often and so positively denied by its critics. Among the more progressive sections, however, the position of women is being viewed from a new angle. Their advance is being recognized by those who have the direction of public affairs as essential for full nationhood. Efforts to promote it have a sympathetic reception; pride is taken in the intellectual ability and practical capacity of women, a few of whom have been advanced to high place and office; for example, a lady is a Minister in the United Provinces, two more are Deputy Speakers in provincial Legislative Councils; in Travancore one was appointed Surgeon-General and another given a judicial appointment (as District Munsif) in 1938. The fear that domestic accomplishments may be displaced by useless learning is losing force as it is proved to be baseless. As long ago as 1899 a Parsi lady wrote that

<sup>1</sup> Article in the *Indian Social Reformer*, loc. cit. Sir P. Hartog, *Some Aspects of Indian Education Past and Present* (1938), pp. 52-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Rusticus Loquitor* (1930), p. 210.



a Parsi girl would not feel that cooking is out of place because she had had a college education, and that she gloried in the fact that she could cook as well as any other good housewife and was able to economize even though rolling in wealth.<sup>1</sup> The same remark applies to the educated women of other communities, though not perhaps without exceptions in the case of those who mix in European society.

## ECONOMIC CHANGES

It has been stated in Chapter IX that, as a result of the British connexion with India, an economic organization which had been static for centuries has been changed to such an extent that there may be said to have been an economic revolution. Up to the end of the eighteenth century economic life was based on the isolated self-sufficing village, and methods of production and distribution were comparable with those of western countries before their life was affected by the Industrial Revolution. In India there has not yet been an industrial revolution such as that which occurred in Great Britain; as the Indian Industrial Commission reported in 1918, the industrial system of India is unevenly, and in most cases inadequately, developed. But there has been a partial degree of industrialization and there has been increasing commercialization in consequence of contacts with the West. The country has come within the orbit of world trade, and even the villages are sensitive to international prices and the vicissitudes of world commerce. The old order based on custom and status has been undermined, and to some extent replaced, by a more progressive and more complex order based on contract. It has not, however, been altogether destroyed. Many as the changes have been, and great as the commercial and industrial advance undoubtedly is, there has not been a complete metamorphosis of economic life, for old methods of commercial and industrial organization coexist with others of a modern western type. There is an indigenous system of banking of great antiquity conducted by 'shroffs', private bankers whose *hundis*, or bills of exchange, have wide currency; some, however, have become so modernized that they issue pass-books, cash cheques, &c. There are also banking institutions of modern creation, similar to those found in the West, some great corporations, others small banks with inadequate capital and reserves. There are exchange banks, joint-stock banks, co-operative banks, the Post Office Savings Bank, and the Reserve Bank of India established in 1935. There are stock exchanges (at Calcutta, Bombay,

<sup>1</sup> *The British Empire Series* (1899), vol. i, p. 389. *India, Ceylon, Straits Settlements, British North Borneo, Hongkong.*

and Madras), Chambers of Commerce, and trade associations; at the same time trade and industry in some places are still regulated by guilds, which are a relic of an earlier age. There are firms consisting of joint-families of the old Indian type, and there are also joint-stock companies of the western kind, though the latter form of business organization has not gained general popularity partly because of its unfamiliarity and partly because of a want of mutual confidence on the part of that all too small section of the public which has capital to invest. In rural areas, though there is an established money economy, a large proportion of the transactions are still carried out by barter or in kind. There are few shops, and most of the retail trade is done in open-air markets held once, twice, or thrice a week as in the Middle Ages in Europe. Side by side with unorganized industries and crafts, in which the operatives are hand workers, working individually and employing age-old methods of production, there are large-scale industries, with modern machinery operated by electric and steam power, and organized on western lines.

The industrial system has had the advantage of cheap labour, though its cheapness is offset by a certain lack of efficiency. On the other hand, it has been hampered by shortage of capital due to the distrust of industrial enterprise shown by the Indian public. Those who have money to spare would, as a rule, rather invest it in land than in manufactures. Large-scale industries were created and built up mainly by Europeans and European capital. 'The capitalists of the country', it was pointed out by the Indian Industrial Commission in 1918, 'have till now left to other nations the work and the profit of manufacturing her valuable raw materials or have allowed them to remain unutilized.' Since then Indians have taken an increasingly large part in financing and controlling industries and manufactures. Owing to the combined efforts of Europeans and Indians, India is ranked among the eight most important industrial countries of the world; its rank is due to agriculture as well as to manufacturing industries,<sup>1</sup> but it is eighth, ninth, and eleventh in the production of pig-iron, coal, and steel respectively. There is a labour force of over a million and a half in factories of different kinds, chiefly textile. Cotton mills employ in round figures 400,000 and jute mills 300,000, engineering works 100,000, and mines a quarter of a million. The cotton mills pro-

<sup>1</sup> India was recognized by the League of Nations in 1922 as one of the eight chief industrial states in the world on the strength of the following facts and figures: 28,000,000 agricultural workers, over 20,000,000 workers in industries (including cottage industries, mines, and transport), 141,000 lascars and other maritime workers—a figure second only to that of the United Kingdom—and a railway mileage exceeding that of any country except the United States of America.



duce nearly two-thirds of the cloth worn by its population. The sugar mills produce a million tons of white sugar a year. The annual output of coal is, according to recent figures, 25 million tons, of pig-iron  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million tons, and of steel (steel ingots and finished steel) nearly 2 million tons. There are large aggregations of industrial labour in works employing modern processes, and these are protected by legislation modelled on that of Great Britain, prescribing standards to which industrial conditions must conform. Factories and Mines Acts regulate the hours and conditions of labour and provide for measures of safety and sanitation. The interests of women workers are safeguarded by Maternity Benefits Acts in five provinces, Bombay, Madras, the Central Provinces, Delhi, and Ajmer-Merwara. A Workmen's Compensation Act guarantees compensation to those who are incapacitated by accidents or industrial disease. The workers are to some extent organized in trade unions, for the registration and protection of which a Trade Unions Act was passed in 1926. A Trade Disputes Act and a Trade Disputes Conciliation Act (in Bombay) have been enacted in order to prevent disputes between employers and employees and to provide machinery for conciliation.

Legislation designed for the protection of workers in British India was first passed for plantations in 1863, for factories in 1881, and for mines in 1901. Since 1918 a number of measures have been added to the statute book which are directly attributable to the influence of Geneva combined with the desire of leaders of political thought that India should not be classed as a backward country at the International Labour Conference. Up to 1936 fourteen of the international conventions of the Conference had been ratified and a number of the recommendations had been applied, while others were applied so far as they were considered suited to Indian conditions. Ratification only implies application in British India and not in the States, but some of the latter have adopted similar measures and there is said to be, at least in the larger States in which industrialization has begun, a growing realization of the need for regulating labour conditions.<sup>1</sup>

Some indication of the extent of industrialization is afforded by the statistics of industrial establishments registered as factories in British India. Of these there were nearly 10,000 in 1937 and the number of workers employed in them was 1,700,000 (including 230,000 women), but this is a mere drop in an ocean of 275 million inhabitants. There has been no appreciable diversion from agriculture to industries. On the contrary, the proportion of the population which is supported by agriculture, in one form or another, has risen slightly. India is still pre-eminently a land of villages

<sup>1</sup> *Industrial Labour in India* (Geneva, 1938), p. 324.

and the majority of its people obtain their livelihood from the land. Town life does not appear to be wholly congenial to the Indian temperament. There are, it is true, 35 cities with over 100,000 inhabitants, but those living in both cities and towns represent only 11 per cent. of the population, rising as high as 22½ per cent. in the presidency of Bombay but falling to 3½ per cent. in Assam. The term town for census purposes includes any place with a continuous collection of houses containing not less than 5,000 inhabitants, and, as is pointed out in the census report for 1931, so far as the conditions of life or occupations of the inhabitants are concerned, the distinction between a small town and a large village is often meaningless, and the treatment of a place as a town does not necessarily imply any degree of industrialization. Most of the places to which the term applies are, in fact, mainly distributing centres. Some are little more than overgrown villages; comparatively few are centres of manufactures or have industrial activities of a western type. The large-scale industries are not widely distributed over the country but localized, being mostly concentrated in a few areas in British India. The jute mills are strung along the river Hooghly near Calcutta, where there were 943 with over 400,000 workers in 1936; the cotton mills are chiefly found in Bombay, Ahmedabad, and Nagpur, the city and island of Bombay having 476 factories with 177,000 workers and Ahmedabad 247 with 103,000 workers; leather manufactories and woollen mills are centred mostly in Cawnpore and Delhi.

The States have nothing like the same industrial importance but there has been a partial measure of industrialization; and this has been accentuated in recent years, partly because the rulers of the more progressive States are anxious to develop their resources and, with this object, have started large State-owned undertakings and have given support to private enterprise, and partly because capitalists find in them a sphere of operation which is not so disturbed by labour troubles as British India. In 1935-6 the number of cotton mills alone was 62, with 26,000 looms and over a million spindles, and the joint-stock companies which were operating in the States had a capital of over a thousand lakhs of rupees in the case of those registered in the States and of £13,000,000 in the case of those registered elsewhere.

The labour force employed in large-scale industries is still for the most part neither permanent nor regular. Its character was described as follows by the Indian Factory Labour Commission of 1907-8:

"The habits of the Indian factory operative are determined by the fact that he is primarily an agriculturist or a labourer on the land. In almost all cases his hereditary occupation is agriculture; his home is in the



village from which he comes, not in the city in which he labours; his wife and family ordinarily continue to live in that village; he regularly remits a portion of his wages there; and he returns there periodically to look after his affairs and to obtain rest after the strain of factory life. There is as yet practically no factory population such as exists in European countries, consisting of a large number of operatives trained from their youth to one particular class of work and dependent upon employment at that work for their livelihood.'

It was found that the claims of the home village were sufficiently strong to recall factory workers from city life for periods extending on the average to at least a month in the year and in the case of jute mills to two or three months a year. Conditions have not changed appreciably in the interval and this account still holds good in the main. The Royal Commission on Labour in India, commonly known from the name of its president as the Whitley Labour Commission, found in 1929-31 that the workers generally retained a connexion with their native villages, and that the average term of employment in great industrial establishments was less than two years and in many was only fifteen or eighteen months. There is, however, beginning to be a nucleus of a permanent labour force in some branches of industry.<sup>1</sup> There are castes which have worked in coal-mines for so many generations that they believe that coal cutting is their hereditary caste occupation and have forgotten that they ever had any other; and there are factories in which there is a permanent body of wage-earners. The majority, however, move from the factory to the village and back again, work for short spells, and spend only part of their working lives in industrial employment.

Another noticeable feature of industrial labour in India is its illiterate character. As was pointed out by the Royal Commission on Labour, this is a state of affairs unknown in any other country of industrial importance, and it is a disability of which it is impossible to over-estimate the consequences, as modern machine industry depends in a peculiar degree on education.<sup>2</sup> One consequence is a low level of efficiency which is an obstacle in the way of India's industrial progress. Another is that the great body of workers is still for the most part unorganized in spite of the trade-union movement and that the trade unions which have been established have been mostly organized, controlled, and directed not by the workers themselves but by outsiders. The first combination of workers was formed in 1890, the Bombay Mill-hands

<sup>1</sup> Special inquiries made by the Labour Office of the Government of Bombay in 1927-8 showed that the periods of continuous active service in cotton mills were: under 5 years in 46 per cent. cases, 5 to 10 years in 25 per cent., 10 to 15 years in 14 per cent., 15 to 20 years in 7 per cent., and over 20 years in 8 per cent.

<sup>2</sup> *Royal Commission on Labour in India* (1931), p. 27.

Association, which was a loose association rather than an organized body, as it had neither a regular constitution nor paying members, though it was sufficiently advanced to publish a newspaper for the purpose of propaganda. Other unions came into existence one by one, but the workers showed little aptitude for combination and for collective action until after the Great War. There was then general labour unrest in the large-scale industries, because the cost of living had increased owing to the rise of prices and there was no corresponding increase of wages in spite of the huge profits made by employers, and the need for collective representation became obvious. The trade-union movement developed and received a further stimulus from the International Labour Organization, as central organizations were required for the nomination of delegates to the International Labour Conference, and these in turn led to the formation of unions as constituent units. By 1926 trade unionism had become important enough to call for legislation, and an Act was passed which provided for the registration of unions and gave registered unions and their members protection against civil suits and criminal prosecutions. To qualify for registration, however, unions had to furnish audited accounts and not less than half of their executive officers had to be actual workers. These provisions have prevented the registration of any but a minority of the unions in existence; in 1935-6 altogether 236 were registered, of which 205 submitted returns showing a membership of 268,000.<sup>1</sup>

The trade-union movement in India has not had to contend with the difficulties which it met in its early days in England, such as the hostility of public opinion and the determined opposition of employers, but it has had other handicaps owing to the character of the labour force and the low state of industrial development. Trade unionism has nothing like the strength and stability it has attained in Great Britain, and so far scarcely forms part of the social life of the working classes. Many unions are of mushroom growth, temporary associations formed in order to organize strikes and coming to an end when the strike is over. There is scarcely any collective bargaining in the sense of negotiations between organizations of employers and organizations of workers. According to a recent publication of the International Labour Office, only one trade union has succeeded in establishing collective bargaining, viz. the Labour Union at Ahmedabad, where there is a permanent arbitration board consisting of representatives of the union and of the Mill Owners' Association, to which disputes are referred if there is a failure to reach agreement after

<sup>1</sup> There are no statistics showing the total number of unions except in Bombay, where there were 133 in the same year, of which 56 were registered.



discussion, first between the workers and the mill management, and then, if necessary, between the union and the association.<sup>1</sup> Few unions have been able to enlist more than a minority of the workers. So many of the workers are in debt that the payment of subscriptions is a serious consideration. Those who can afford to subscribe are deterred from doing so because they see no tangible benefit from membership, few unions undertaking benevolent work such as sickness insurance. According to the Whitley Commission, the majority find it hard to convince the worker that a subscription is worth while except when a dispute is imminent or is actually in progress. The workers, being nearly all illiterate, have, as already mentioned, to rely on leaders who have had the advantage of education, such as lawyers and professional men, who fortunately include a certain number of social workers, but less fortunately a far greater number of political agitators. There has been for some time past a tendency to make trade unionism a stalking horse for communism; the influence of this may, for example, be seen in a resolution passed in 1939 by the All-Kerala Labour Conference at Travancore, which set forth that it adopted Soviet Russia as its ideal and affirmed that it was the only country standing for world peace and the protection of the rights and privileges of the down-trodden and exploited millions. At present employers are as a rule reluctant to recognize trade unions because they represent only a minority of the workers and because of the unrepresentative character of so many of their leaders. Experience has shown that frequently strikes are called without the trade unions being consulted and that trade-union leaders are unable to honour their undertakings. Employers would, however, welcome the growth of a healthy trade unionism, which would, they believe, be a bulwark against the spread of communism and prevent industry becoming a pawn on the political chess-board.

There has been a certain measure of rural industrialization, various manufactures, notably of sugar, being started in country districts, but these are mainly small and not large-scale industries. In the country generally domestic industry still prevails. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that there has been what is virtually an agrarian revolution owing partly to changes in the economic organization of rural districts caused by the development of transport, external as well as internal, and partly to changes in the status of different classes connected with the land and in their relations both to the State and to one another, which have resulted from British administration of the land revenue system.

This is not a British system, but an Indian system which the British inherited from the Mughals and their Hindu

<sup>1</sup> *Industrial Labour in India* (Geneva, 1938), p. 134.

predecessors in rule. It was, however, largely transformed by the principles which were applied in making what are called settlements of land revenue. These settlements determine what shall be the amount of land revenue, who shall be responsible for its payment, and what shall be the rights and interests attached to different tenures. Under the system which prevailed before the establishment of British rule landed rights were uncertain and indeterminate. They were not defined by law and consequently had no juridical significance. The sovereign, who had a lien on a share of the produce or its money value, recognized that the cultivator had a right to the remainder, but not that he had a proprietary right to the land itself. The latter had rights without real property, for he was entitled by immemorial custom to hold the land which he tilled, but only so long as he paid the revenue assessed on it or claimed by the State, and he was liable to summary ejectment and even enslavement if he failed to do so. The actual demand was often very different from the amount assessed. It might be more or it might be less according to the seasons and the plenty or dearth which they brought, and also according to the rapacity or moderation of the government officers who collected it or of the men to whom the revenue was farmed out, many of whom acquired a hereditary status. There was no legal limit to the amount which might be assessed, and in practice there was, in the period anterior to British rule, no limit to what might be demanded except the capacity to pay. The absence of restrictions on the supreme power in the determination of its demand left property in the land dependent on its will. Land was in fact held at its discretion, and its demand might be so great as to absorb the profits of cultivation. In a memorial regarding the Press ordinance of 1823 which was presented to the Supreme Court in Calcutta by Raja Ram Mohan Ray, three members of the Tagore family, and two others, it was stated that: 'Under former governments their forefathers were obliged to lay waste the greater part of their estates in order to make them appear of inferior value, that they might not excite the cupidity of government and thus cause their rents to be increased or themselves to be dispossessed of their lands.'<sup>1</sup>

Such prescriptive rights as the peasantry possessed were obliterated by the arbitrary exercise of power. In a minute written by Robert Merittins Bird in 1832 with reference to conditions in the north-west it was remarked:

'It is often stated that the ryots have no rights and claim no rights. This is true in a sense. If asked the question direct, the common reply is "We are the slaves of the Hakim;"<sup>2</sup> what rights can we possess?' Yet

<sup>1</sup> J. K. Mazumdar, *Indian Speeches and Documents on British Rule 1821-1928* (1937), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. the government.



these very men declare that they hold their fields while they pay their dues and will think it a great injustice if they are turned out contrary to the custom of the village.'

In the Punjab, where there had been wholesale dispossession of landholders, who were ousted in favour of men who would pay more revenue, Sikhs, when asked what their rights had been in pre-British days, replied: 'Why do you ask such a question? It is you who have created property.' The rights of cultivators, depending on long-established usage and having no legal sanction, were little regarded either by government or by private individuals, territorial magnates and others, who usurped power. In Bengal the ryots lived in almost complete servitude under the zamindars, having no rights except the plea of ancient custom and no protection from unjust exactions except such as was to be found in the clemency of the zamindars or their sense of self-interest.<sup>1</sup> In Oudh again the great landholders known as *talukdars* overrode customary rights. The ryots claimed that they had a right not to be turned out of their holdings, but, when asked whether the *talukdars* had authority to do so, would say, 'Of course they had; the man in power could do anything.'

Following the previous theory and practice of the Muslim rulers from whom they took over the administration, the British took as a premiss the principle that the proprietary right in the soil was vested in the sovereign,<sup>2</sup> and then proceeded to introduce English ideas of private property. Two schools of thought prevailed at different times and in different areas, one in favour of a landed aristocracy and therefore seeking to set up a body of landlords of the English pattern, the other anxious to maintain a body of peasant proprietors. The first school was in the ascendant in 1793, when the Permanent Settlement was made and there was a wholesale creation of landlords, with a permanent property in the land, in Bengal, Bihar, and some adjoining districts of Madras and the United Provinces. This was done in pursuance of a definite economic theory by Lord Cornwallis, who aimed at establishing a squirearchy. This was to take over the landlord rights of government. There was to be a kind of self-expropriation by the State in order to carry out a doctrinaire theory. Nothing, he maintained, could be so contrary to the public interest as that the land should be retained as government property. Private landlords with an

<sup>1</sup> R. C. Dutt, *The Peasantry of Bengal* (1874), p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> The Abbé DuBois observed in *Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies* (first published in 1816) that Malabar was 'the only province in India where proprietary right has been preserved intact to the present day'. Everywhere else the soil belongs to the ruler, and the cultivator is merely his tenant'. In Malabar proprietary rights appear to have resembled English freehold rights.

assured and permanent title were necessary in order that the land might be reclaimed and cultivation extended—a very relevant consideration after the terrible famine of 1770, when it was estimated that one-third of the country lay waste for want of cultivators. A tenure for a limited period of, say, ten years could not, he argued, be a sufficient inducement to clear the waste. 'Failing the claim of right of the zamindars', he wrote, 'it would be necessary for the public good to grant a right of property in the soil to them or to persons of other descriptions.' A landlord class was, in his opinion, a social and political, as well as an economic, necessity on account of its potentialities for good and the contribution which he expected it to make to the general welfare of the country by encouraging agriculture and improving the condition of the tenantry.

The zamindars of whom he wrote were a heterogeneous collection of men, including farmers and collectors of revenue, who were removable at the pleasure of the government, and also territorial magnates holding extensive estates, which were handed down from father to son, and in which they exercised wide powers. All were referred to as zamindars, which means simply landholders, and all were placed on the same footing and received rights of proprietorship which had been vested in the State. It was not, however, absolute proprietorship, for it was subject to the payment of land revenue and their rights were also limited by those of subordinate tenure-holders and the customary rights of rent-paying ryots, as indeed the ownership of the State had been. It was not intended to change the relations between them and the ryots. The rights of the latter were specifically recognized by the regulation implementing the Permanent Settlement, which set forth, in declaratory terms, that the ryots were entitled to fixity of tenure subject to the payment of the customary or established rates of rent. The position of the new landlords was therefore somewhat analogous to that of the old English lord of a manor in which there were farmers holding by copyhold, so that, though the lord of the manor owned the estate, his tenants also possessed various rights and interests, which prevented him from having absolute proprietorship.

The security of the land revenue and certainty in its realization were among the objects of the settlement. The land revenue was fixed and made permanent, and it was hoped that the landlords would be equally permanent. The falsity of this hope was soon apparent. The landlords were required to pay their revenue regularly and punctually whether the seasons were good or bad and whether they got rents from their tenants or not, and their estates were liable to be sold up for arrears of revenue on the first default. It was 'so nominated in the bond'; the loss of the whole



estate was 'the penalty and forfeit of the bond'. This was regarded, not unnaturally, as an odious innovation. Landholders in Bengal told Buchanan-Hamilton, when he was engaged in his statistical survey early in the nineteenth century, that they preferred the old régime. It was true, they said, that they had been oppressed and ill-treated by the Mughal officers, but the harshness of the latter could be mitigated by bribery, and there was at any rate no such thing as selling their land when payments of revenue were in arrears, 'which was a practice they could not endure'. They were in fact between the devil and the deep sea. They found it difficult to collect their rents because they claimed more than the customary rate, and the tenants, unwilling to pay an enhanced rent, refused to pay anything at all. Their estates were sold up by government for arrears of revenue and then resold to new purchasers in such numbers that by the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century the old class of zamindars had been largely replaced by a new class, many of them absentee landlords. A proprietary middle class had been created—as early as 1829 Lord William Bentinck wrote of a vast body of rich landed proprietors connected for the most part with Calcutta<sup>1</sup>—but it was not the class which it had been intended to establish and preserve.

The Permanent Settlement also failed to give security to the tenantry. It was acknowledged that they had rights which were not extinguished by the grant of a proprietary interest to the zamindars. The regulation already mentioned, after reciting that it was the duty of the ruling power to protect all classes of people, and particularly those who from their situation were helpless, declared that the government would, when it thought fit, enact regulations for the protection of subordinate tenure-holders and cultivators. These excellent sentiments were not implemented, a regulation made in 1794 merely providing that the civil courts were to decide disputes about land. In 1819 the Directors of the East India Company lamented that the object of the Permanent Settlement, in so far as it concerned the security and happiness of 'the most numerous and industrious class of the community', had been so imperfectly attained that instead of their rights being maintained they had not even been ascertained. Tenants were rack-rented and evicted by their landlords, to whom government gave extraordinary powers with the twofold object of safeguarding the revenue and preventing estates being broken up or sold. The landlords were given authority to evict tenants, distrain and sell their property, and even seize their persons, without recourse to the courts of law. The tenant had no lease or documentary

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Keith, *Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy 1750-1921* (1922), vol. i, p. 215.

evidence of his rights; all he could do was to bring a civil suit against his landlord in order to recover his rights after they had been infringed.

It was already evident that the expectation that the landlords would exercise a beneficent influence was illusory. It was indeed opposed to the traditional Indian idea of the duties and obligations of superior landholders, which cannot be better explained than in the words of Sir George Campbell:

'To expect of them to perform the duties of an English landlord, to build, and plant, and introduce improved agriculture and improved machinery, if it ever was expected, was a mere chimera, and not reasonably to be looked for under the circumstances. These are not the functions of a native landlord. If a man encourages and protects the ryots who break up his waste and till his lands, and deals faithfully and equitably by them, he is considered to do his duty. If he further acts the part of a capitalist money-lender and advances money and seed, to be repaid with interest at harvest time, he does something more; and if the interest exacted is not too exorbitant, he is a model landlord.'

Taking them as a whole, the landlords were not prepared to deal faithfully and equitably by their tenants in the absence of any legal measures compelling them to do so. The magistrate of one district in Bengal wrote in 1810 of a general system of rack-renting and exactions practised by the zamindars, their agents, and underlings, and of arbitrary demands enforced by stocks, duress, and battery of the persons of the cultivators. The magistrate of another district, describing the illegal cesses which were added to the rents, declared that not a child could be born, not a son or daughter married, not even one of 'the tyrannical fraternity' of zamindars could die without a visitation of calamity to the ryot. There was in fact what has been called in Chapter IX degradation and widespread loss of rights, and this was realized at the time. In 1815 the Marquess of Hastings warned the Directors of the East India Company that what he called 'the class of village proprietors' was in train of annihilation and would soon be extinct unless measures were taken for their protection. Any remedy that might be proposed might, however, be too late, for 'the licence of twenty years which has been left to the zamindars will have given them the power—and they have never wanted the inclination—to extinguish the rights of this class, so that no remnants of them will soon be discoverable'.

In order to preserve their rights, Lord William Bentinck proposed in 1832 that if a resident cultivator paid the same rate of rent for a consecutive period of twelve years, neither he nor his successors should become the subject of any enhanced demand. This

<sup>1</sup> *Systems of Land Tenure in Various Countries* (1881), pp. 242-3.



period eventually became the legal term of prescription, entailing what is called occupancy right, which was given, *longo intervallo*, statutory recognition by the Bengal Land Law of 1859. That was the first of a number of legislative measures which were designed to give the tenantry in different provinces what are called in Ireland the three F's, viz. fixity of tenure, fair rents, and freedom of sale, and which in many cases restored rights which they had lost. In the Punjab, for example, the immediate effect of the Punjab Tenancy Act in five districts was to restore occupancy rights to 63,000 persons, who had been reduced to the position of tenants at will.

The efforts of the State were directed more to the securing and safeguarding of equitable terms of tenure for the cultivators than to the fixation of rents. Although, however, rents were not fixed by State agency, the State intervened to limit the power of the landlords to raise them by providing that they could be enhanced only at stated intervals and by imposing a legal limit on the proportion by which they could then be enhanced. As an instance of the effect of such legislation we may take the case of the United Provinces. There 67 per cent. of the tenants in the Agra province have a hereditary right to their holdings and 16 per cent. a life-interest, and rents can only be increased at intervals of twenty years, while in Oudh 8 per cent. have a hereditary and 71 per cent. a life status, while the interval is ten years.

There was no arbitrary bestowal of superior rights in Madras and Bombay, except in portions of the former, covering 24,000 square miles, which had come under the operation of the Permanent Settlement. In Madras the government, continuing a pre-existing system, dealt direct with the actual ryots and made a settlement with them, which is accordingly known as *ryotwari*. It collected revenue from them without any intermediaries, accepting the views of Sir Thomas Munro, who insisted that they could not be treated as mere tenants.

'The collector', he wrote, 'looks upon the ryot as a mere tenant, and hence he infers that the occupation of land in India may be regulated as in England. But the station of the ryot is not as is made by his plan. The ryot is certainly not like the landlord in England, but neither is he like the English tenant. If the name of landlord belongs to any person in India, it is to the ryot. He divides with government all the rights of the land. Whatever is not reserved by government belongs to him. He is not a tenant at will or for a number of years. He is not removable because another offers more.'

The ryots were admitted to have proprietary rights in their holdings, which they were free to mortgage, sell, devise, or otherwise alienate provided they paid the revenue to which they were assessed. In this way a body of peasant proprietors was constituted, each

with a small farm, now averaging about 6½ acres. English ideas of individual, as opposed to collective, responsibility were also applied. In some parts there were villages which were jointly responsible for the revenue, i.e. a lump sum was assessed and paid, the villagers themselves apportioning the share to be contributed by each. This communal system was set aside by the government, which assessed each villager separately, but it was retained for half a century by the villagers concerned, who lumped the individual assessments together and then privately settled the quota to be paid by each according to old custom.

In Bombay the system which was eventually adopted was also that of peasant proprietorship, after a different system had been tried and failed. At first village head-men were made responsible for the land revenue, as they had been under the Marathas, and they were left to collect their shares from the cultivators, who, it was thought, would be sufficiently protected by registering their tenures. This system broke down. The demand, though lower than that of the Marathas, was too high. The cultivators were exploited by head-men and underlings, who did not scruple to resort to torture in order to enforce payment of the just dues or their unjust exactions. Many villages were abandoned; in some areas only a third of the arable land remained under cultivation; one district was said to be half depopulated. Resort was then had to the *ryotwari* system based on a survey of the fields. A moderate sum was assessed, and the holdings were made transferable and heritable property, subject only to the payment of the revenue assessed.

In the north-west matters took a different course. At first, owing to ignorance of the system of tenures, settlements were made with landholders, great and small, whose tenures seemed to be of a quasi-proprietary and hereditary character; failing them villages were farmed out. As in Bombay, the assessments, though no higher than those of previous governments, were beyond the capacity for payment. As in Bengal, landholders unable to comply with the rigid rule of punctual payment had their lands sold up. According to a contemporary authority, Sir James Abbott, who characterized the assessments as 'impossible' and 'insane', thousands every year were converted from productive to unproductive members of the community and turned adrift from the lands which their fathers' fathers had cultivated time out of mind to become vagabonds, beggars, or robbers.

As the abuses became obvious a remedy was applied. At the instance of Holt Mackenzie a regulation was enacted in 1822, of which the keynote was that landed rights, interests, and liabilities should be ascertained and recorded before a settlement was made. This was the basis of the settlement



begun in 1833 by Robert Merttins Bird. Until the latter year individual rights were not ascertained, and it was assumed that the decision of questions relating to them might safely be left to the operation of the civil courts. The results of engrafting English modes of judicial procedure on to the landed system were lamentable. To quote an account given in 1849 by James Thomason, Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces, 'injustice and confusion necessarily ensued. Designing men usurped rights which did not belong to them, and blunders of all kinds were committed by those who ought to have protected the rights of the weaker parties. In such confusion the litigation increased till the whole machinery of the judicial administration was choked.'

The first step towards the creation of private proprietary rights was taken by limiting the land revenue to a reasonable amount, so that landholders were left with a profit which constituted a form of property. But the settlements went much farther than this. The intention of making any revolution in the disposition of property was disclaimed. The settlements were supposed merely to ascertain what were the existing rights and to uphold them, and settlement officers were expressly instructed not to create new rights but simply to define those which were found to be already in existence. There was an underlying assumption however that there were distinct proprietary rights which had only to be ascertained in order to be registered. This was by no means the case. Though there were such rights in some parts, they did not exist or had no vitality in others, being vague and inchoate, without any binding force 'or having been extinguished, or having fallen into abeyance.' The consequence was that the function of the settlement officers has been, to a great extent, not only to ascertain rights but also to create a class of rights which did not exist before, or, at any rate, to give them a form and substance which they did not before possess.<sup>1</sup>

Although it was honestly intended to maintain the *status quo ante*, the tendency of officers who were unable to conceive of anything but English forms of property was not simply to record the tenures as they were, but as they thought they should be, and rights which were often imperfect and rudimentary were converted into distinct property, generally on the basis of long possession. In the greater part of the province a landlord tenure was created and different classes of landholders having superior rights were made proprietors with tenants under them. Some were great landholders who had for generations collected rents from cultivators; others were head-men of villages who had been responsible for the collec-

<sup>1</sup> Sir George Campbell in *Systems of Land Tenure in Various Countries* (1881), p. 246.

tion of revenue. Others were village communities, coparcenary bodies of yeomen or peasants, some of which let the land in whole or in part to tenants. Others, however, cultivated it themselves and accordingly became corporate peasant proprietors. They were still responsible for the payment of revenue in a lump sum, but in course of time individual responsibility was substituted for joint responsibility and separate assessments were made with individual members in many cases.

The distribution of landed rights in other parts of India was determined largely by the degree to which policy was shaped by the views of those who favoured a landed aristocracy or a body of yeoman or peasant proprietors, the landlords' party and the people's party, as they were called. The antithesis between the two is well illustrated by the variance between the Lawrence brothers with regard to the treatment of the *jagirdars* of the Punjab. These were holders of assignments of land, in return for which they paid no revenue but were bound to render services of a military, religious, or general character. Sir Henry was eager to maintain them in full possession of their grants and to preserve their privileges. Very different views were held by Sir John, who said that one lakh given in the reduction of assessments and making people comfortable and happy in their homes was better than three lakhs given to Rajas, and that his object was to see the country thickly cultivated by a fat, contented yeomanry, each man riding his own horse, sitting under his own fig-tree, and enjoying his rude family comforts. The views of Sir John Lawrence prevailed. He bluntly told the *jagirdars* that the British wanted neither their soldiers nor their prayers, and could not afford to pay for them, and he accordingly assessed them to revenue and curtailed their grants, some of which were made tenable only for the lifetime of their holders.

In this province peasant proprietorship was made the general rule, the normal tenure being that under which joint village communities were at the same time proprietors and cultivators. In the Central Provinces and Oudh, on the other hand, the landlord party carried the day. In the former farmers of revenue and village head-men became superior proprietors; in Oudh, where the *talukdars* had long been in a dominant position and the rights of village communities and individual ryots had disappeared or were weak and precarious, the *talukdars* were given proprietary rights. This policy aroused the indignation of advocates of the cultivators' cause such as Sir George Campbell, who inveighed against 'the craze for creating landlords'. Formerly, he admitted, it had been possible to imagine that zamindars could perform the useful duties of British landlords, but long experience had shown how illusory and baseless was this hope, and wherever landlord rights were



sanctioned, it became necessary to take measures for the protection of the cultivators 'without too directly impugning the sacred rights of property which we have in most cases created in a mere enthusiasm of landlordism'.<sup>1</sup>

In Oudh there were exceptional circumstances. After the Mutiny there was a wholesale confiscation of land, which was followed by a wholesale creation of landed rights *de novo*. Lord Canning held that the *talukdars* had forfeited their lands by rebellion. The penalty of confiscation of property was, in his opinion, no more than a just one for rebels, who in any case had for the most part usurped their lands and villages by means of fraud and violence; and he desired to have a *tabula rasa* which would enable him to redress past injustice and to grant restitution to any who by assisting in the restoration of peace and order showed that they deserved consideration. Accordingly, a proclamation was issued in 1858 announcing that, with the exception of those who had proved their loyalty during the Mutiny, the proprietary right in the soil of the province was confiscated to the British government, which would dispose of it in such manner as might seem fitting. The government had thus a free hand, but in the end settlement was made with the *talukdars*, for reasons which were much the same as those which had actuated Lord Cornwallis. The view of the Government of India, as expressed in a letter to the Secretary of State, was that the maintenance of a landed aristocracy in India, where it existed, was an object of such importance that government could well afford to sacrifice to it something of a system which had led to the exhaustion or decay of the old nobility, though it had increased the independence, and protected the rights, of the cultivators. English ideas of proprietorship were applied. The *talukdars* received title-deeds and were given rights resembling those of English landlords, including the right of bequest by will, a right unknown to Hindu law; an Act passed in 1900 enables them to entail the whole or part of their estates. Proprietorship is, however, not absolute. The rights of the *talukdars* are subject to the liability to pay land revenue and also to their treating their tenants reasonably. In one case the *sanad* of a *talukdar*, i.e. the document which constituted his title-deed, was cancelled on the ground that he had enhanced rents excessively and discouraged cultivation, whereas the *sanad* stipulated that he should promote the agricultural prosperity of his estate. In other cases warnings have been given that the *sanads* may be cancelled, and these have been sufficient. In about two-thirds of the province, where there were no *talukdars* or they could not prove superior rights, settlements were made with village communities.

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of my Indian Career* (1893), vol. ii, p. 178.

We may now summarize the chief changes which have been made in the land system. The British continued the system which they inherited from the Mughals, but modified it materially by introducing their own ideas of private proprietorship. As observed in Chapter III, the government has abandoned the attitude of its predecessors in rule, who claimed to be absolute owners of the soil, but the State still retains certain attributes of ownership, the landholders' rights being subject to its superior rights. Land is heritable, transferable, and marketable, but only on condition that the land revenue assessed on it is paid. Its payment is, in fact, a condition of tenure, and it therefore partakes of the nature of rent, though it may also be regarded in the light of a tax. Should there be default, the State has a right of ultimate ownership, as it has power to sell the estate or take it under its own management.<sup>1</sup> In any case, default or no default, it has the sole right to minerals on the soil. In the Bombay presidency the ownership of government is expressly recognized by law; and in temporarily settled areas in the United Provinces the limited rights of the landholder are made explicit by a rule that if he refuses to accept a revised assessment, he may be excluded from his estate for a term of years, during which, however, he receives an allowance equal to a certain proportion (5 to 15 per cent.) of the assessment.

A regular system of private rights has, as pointed out by Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, been substituted for a drifting mass of variable village customs.<sup>2</sup> Landed rights have been given legal definition and have been secured by law. Legal titles have taken the place of mere prescriptive rights, and there is a legalized concept of property in land which is fundamentally different from the rights which had only custom as their sanction. In zamindari areas the creation of a body of landlords out of the holders of tenures intermediate between the sovereign and the actual cultivators involved in many cases a lowering of the status of the latter, though their interests were eventually safeguarded, and their status often restored, by legislation. On the other hand, cultivators in other areas had their status improved by being raised to the position of proprietors with a clear title in the land. Owing to the rise in the value of land, the position of the two classes has tended to become assimilated. The *ryotwari* revenue-payers were originally simply cultivators and not rent-receivers, but since land has been at a premium, it has become profitable for them to sublet

<sup>1</sup> In the permanently settled areas of Bengal and Bihar the sale of the estate is the penalty of default. Elsewhere there are other processes for the recovery of arrears of land revenue, e.g., the attachment and sale of movable and immovable property, including the estate in question, its transfer to co-sharers, and the assumption of its management by government.

<sup>2</sup> W. W. Hunter, *Life of the Earl of Mayo* (1876), vol. ii, p. 208.



holdings in whole or in part and live on, or supplement income from, the rents paid by sub-tenants. In this way many of them have been converted into rent-receivers like the zamindari revenue-payers, most of whom are only rent-receivers and not cultivators, though a certain number keep the whole or part of their estates under their own cultivation.<sup>1</sup>

Further, there have been changes in the composition of the landed classes. As already shown, first in Bengal and Bihar, and then in north-west India, the greater part of the soil changed hands within a single generation as estates were sold up for arrears of revenue, and lands and villages passed into possession of land-jobbers, lawyers, traders, and capitalists, some of whom kept them in their own hands, while others sold them at a profit. Peasant proprietors also lost their lands as they were sold in pursuance of decrees issued by the civil courts for non-payment of debts. Expropriation on account of private debts was a western and not an Indian practice. Formerly there was no such thing as the forced sale of land for debts or eviction from an ancestral holding by legal process. Debts were limited in amount because of the poor security which could be offered, viz. cattle and personal property. Holdings might be transferred by way of mortgage, which gave time for the repayment of the sums advanced and allowed of the recovery of possession, but a creditor had no legal right to evict his debtor or sell his holding. The position was completely changed by the establishment of private property in the soil and by the demand for land due to the increase of population consequent on settled conditions and the removal of checks like war and widespread famine; the number added to the population every twenty-five years is equal to the total population of Great Britain. Holdings became a transferable and marketable property; their value was enhanced, and there was no lack of purchasers ready to pay competitive prices. Proprietary rights gave the peasant a power of borrowing which he had not had before. Money-lenders, having better security, gave larger loans and were armed with new powers by a western system of law, which insisted on the enforcement of contracts and allowed land to be seized and sold in pursuance of decrees.

Indebtedness increased owing to better credit rather than to impoverishment or extravagance. Its root causes were perhaps more psychological than economic. The Indian peasant generally leads a life of parsimonious economy, but he is lavish on occasion, especially in the discharge of social or customary obligations

<sup>1</sup> In the United Provinces, for example, there are 1,200,000 proprietors who keep land under their own cultivation, but the greater part of the 35 million acres of agricultural land is cultivated by rent-paying tenants, numbering five to six millions.

like entertainments on the occasion of marriage. Like many English purchasers of goods on the hire instalment system, he does not sufficiently realize the liabilities which he incurs or sufficiently estimate his capacity to meet them. He is improvident, but his improvidence, as was pointed out by the Deccan Riots Commission, consists rather in the short-sighted imprudence of an ignorant class, ready to relieve present necessity by discounting future income on any terms and unable to realize the consequences of obligations foolishly contracted, than in an extravagant expenditure or misapplication of income.

Under the English system of law, when debts at a ruinous rate were contracted with money-lenders and not discharged, the end only too often was loss of land by due process of law; the law allowed it and the court decreed it. In the Deccan the widespread expropriation of peasant proprietors, who became tenants at will subject to rack-rents, led in 1873 to a rising. After this the government stepped in and enacted a measure for their relief, which gave them protection similar to that provided for bankrupt debtors by the law of insolvency and exempted their immovable property from liability to sale in execution of decrees. This measure checked but did not put a stop to the transfer of land, which continued to pass from the cultivating to trading and other classes.

Protective legislation was also necessary in the Punjab, where the old landed system began to crumble before the insidious assaults of money-lenders reinforced by the arm of the law. The joint village communities showed signs of dissolution owing to the introduction of small non-agricultural capitalists, strangers to the brotherhood of which they were composed. Alienations had formerly been restricted by custom, as they were not within the competence of individual shareholders but required the approval of the community as a whole; and the community was opposed to transfers to outsiders. Sales of land in execution of decrees were almost unknown before 1874, but after that they became common, as law and contractual obligations overrode custom. A process set in which is best described in the words used in one of the Punjab District Gazetteers:

"The door having once been opened to outsiders, capitalists and money-lenders, the homogeneous character of the community disappears; conflicting interests begin to clash with one another; disintegration of joint rights follows; each shareholder hastens to clamour for the separation of his individual share; the common land is divided, till perhaps the only relic of common ownership left is a patch of grazing ground which was not worth partitioning or a common burial ground to mark the common goal to which all alike are tending."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Gujranwala District Gazetteer* (Lahore, 1895), p. 72.



A remedy was eventually applied by the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900, which prohibited both the sale of agricultural land in execution of decrees and also its sale by members of agricultural tribes to non-members, except in special cases for which special sanction was required; in addition to this, mortgages of land by agriculturists to non-agriculturists were made illegal unless they provided for automatic redemption. In areas, such as the United Provinces, where they have not been safeguarded by special legislation, the village communities have tended to dissolve into their component elements, and there has been an advance from holdings in commonalty to holdings in severalty, from the corporate possession of the community to individual proprietorship. The change is not altogether to be regretted, for, though it has involved a loss of corporate life, it has made for progress by giving scope to individual enterprise.

Agricultural indebtedness, accentuated, as it has been, by the great expansion of credit caused by the conferment of full rights of transfer, is an evil which has so far baffled the efforts of the government. In the nineteenth century the influence of western economic thought was sufficient to prevent legal restrictions on usury, but attempts to afford some relief were made in 1883 and 1884 when Acts (the Land Improvement and Agriculturists Loan Acts) were passed which enabled provincial governments to advance loans on easy terms to agriculturists. A further step was taken in 1904 by the enactment of a law providing for the establishment of a western form of organization, the co-operative credit society, based on the same principle of mutual self-help as the societies founded by Raffheisen in Germany and Luzzatti in Italy.

When first introduced, the law, which was largely based on the Friendly Societies Act of Great Britain, was objected to by Indian members on the ground that the Indian character lacked the spirit of co-operation; but Lord Curzon, who was determined to check the progress of what he called a canker eating into the vitals of national life, entertained no such doubts. He anticipated gradual growth, not a rapid revolution. The experiment might fail in some places, but here and there a few co-operative societies would come into existence and would gradually strike their roots into the soil and each tree so rooted would ultimately cast its own shade and be a parent of others. Experience justified his hopes. The co-operative societies took root and spread, and the movement was given further scope in 1912 by legislation which authorized the formation of societies for other purposes than credit and provided for the establishment of central organizations. Although western in form, it proved not uncongenial to the Indian temperament,

the idea of one for all and all for one being in accordance with the Indian spirit of collectivism, of which the joint-family and the joint village community are characteristic examples. Further, it introduced a new element into village life, a form of corporate organization which, though primarily economic, covers many other activities affecting rural well-being, as may be realized from the designation and objects of different societies, such as village credit societies, marketing societies, consolidation of holdings societies, irrigation societies, milk societies (for the co-operative sale and supply of milk), industrial societies (e.g. of weavers, leather-workers, and fishermen), thrift societies, 'better-living' societies, anti-malarial societies, and education societies; in the Punjab they have given a real impetus to education, organizing adult schools and establishing free reading-rooms and circulating libraries.

There are now over 100,000 societies with more than four million members, but the problem of agricultural indebtedness has by no means been solved. The movement affects only a small portion of the agricultural population; money-lenders still have in their hands the greater part of the credit operations. The amount of rural debt is huge. It was estimated at 900 crores of rupees, or £675,000,000, by the Central Banking Committee, after provincial inquiries in 1930, and it is now certainly larger owing to the heavy fall in the price of agricultural products consequent on the depression which set in in 1929. There is also a deplorable amount of industrial indebtedness. Inquiries made in 1930 showed that the ratio of families with a burden of debt varied from 33 per cent. among workers on railways in Bengal to 90 per cent. among cotton mill operatives in Bombay; and it was estimated that the average in most industrial centres was 66 per cent. The general conclusion of the Royal Commission on Labour in India was that the majority of industrial workers are in debt for the greater part of their working lives.

The depression to which we have just alluded caused a serious set-back to the co-operative movement. Thousands of credit societies failed to weather the storm and foundered, and there is scarcely as yet a recovery. Special legislation has had to be undertaken to restrict the operations of money-lenders, e.g. by requiring them to take out licences and by reducing rates of interest and the amounts of debt recoverable. The co-operative movement has been found to depend largely on official initiative and support and to fail when these are not forthcoming. It is scarcely as yet an independent movement of the people themselves. On the other hand, it may fairly be claimed that by introducing a new system of rural finance it has broken the monopoly of the money-lender wherever credit societies have been established, and that the



societies organized for purposes other than credit have amply proved their value as an agency for rural betterment.

Another change of no small sociological importance has been the progressive substitution of small for large estates, owing to the break-up of joint-families which has been a feature of Indian life since it came into contact with the West, and the working of the laws of inheritance quite independently of outside influences. There is no law of primogeniture either for Hindus or Muslims. In Hindu families sons and male agnates succeed, and the Islamic law of inheritance prescribes a minute and complicated system of shares. A few instances of the consequent multiplication and diminution of the size of estates will suffice. A special inquiry made a few years ago in 2,400 villages in the Punjab showed that 18 per cent. of the owners' holdings were under 1 acre, 25 per cent. between 1 and 3 acres, 15 per cent. between 3 and 5 acres, and 8 per cent. between 5 and 10 acres. In two districts of North Bihar (Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga) there were 1,331 estates in 1793; a century later the number was over 30,000, of which 27,000 were the direct result of partitions. In spite of a law that no estate should be partitioned of which the land revenue was less than Rs.10, the subdivision of estates still went on, over 9,000 being added in the next thirty years. In one of these districts there was an average of 37 proprietors to a village, each having 12 acres; an extreme case was that of a village of 179 acres in which there were found to be 159 owners of 114 petty properties. In the other district there were altogether 135,000 proprietors and the average estate varied from 8 acres in an area of petty owners to 204 acres in an area where the major part of the land belonged to one large estate. In a third district (Saran), where partitions were less numerous, the number of estates rose in a century from 1,818 to 5,650 with an average area of 14 acres only. Here fragmentation of landed interests has been carried to such lengths that there is a local table of measures of which the lowest denominator is a 59-millionth part of an estate. Incredible as it may appear, still more minute fractions, each with a distinguishing name, were found in the course of the settlement proceedings, one recognized unit being  $1/9,216,000,000$ th and another  $1/73,728,000,000,000$ th of an estate.

Not only has there been fragmentation of estates, but there is also in many parts of the country a system of infeudation which has created a number of tenures intermediate between the zamindars and the actual cultivators. In one Bengal district where subinfeudation is extreme, there are half a million subordinate tenures, each with permanent, transferable, and heritable rights, and a complex system is made still more complicated by the fact that superior holders often take under-tenures from their own tenants,

and the same person may hold three or four classes of rights in the same bit of land.

We may now turn to the tenants holding land under landlords. Their economic condition has also been changed substantially chiefly owing to the natural increase of population ensuing on the *Pax Britannica* and the removal of checks. So long as population was comparatively sparse, there was a demand for cultivators to take up land and bring new cultivable land under the plough. As it increased there was competition for land among the cultivators themselves, which was accentuated to some extent by the decay of some indigenous handicrafts owing to the greater popularity of machine-made imports from the West, which threw handicraftsmen on the land. Further it was enhanced by the growing prosperity of some non-agricultural castes following despised callings, whose members used their savings to invest in land and took to the more honourable occupation of agriculture. Landlords took advantage of the general land hunger to demand higher rents, to evict occupants who could not pay them, and to let their holdings to those who could and would. Competitive rents thus began to take the place of customary rents.

After protective legislation was undertaken the position of the tenantry was stronger and more secure, and many who had been ground down by their landlords acquired a spirit of independence once they had the law at their backs. In Bengal an agrarian movement sprang up in 1873, when the ryots in some areas combined in a kind of land league to resist landlords' exactions and defeated them by united opposition, leaving them no alternative but to bring suits against every tenant on their estates—a result which a contemporary official publication described as an agrarian revolution by due course of law. In Bihar, however, the tenants remained a depressed class at the mercy of landlords, who rack-rented them and deprived them of their rights till the Bengal Tenancy Act was passed in 1885. Agrarian legislation was also passed in other provinces, and now the tenants generally have rights of occupancy, are exempt from eviction except for arrears of rent under a decree of a civil court, and are secured against unreasonable enhancement of rents. Heritable rights in holdings, the fixation of a reasonable rent, and stability in the rent so fixed are assured. In the United Provinces moreover non-occupancy tenants have been given the right to hold their land for their lifetime and their heirs for five years. Necessary as they are, measures of this kind have reacted to the disadvantage of petty landlords, many of whom are forced to turn to other avocations.

The tenantry have also been injuriously affected by the fragmentation of their holdings resulting from the break-up of joint-



families and the operation of the laws of inheritance, which incidentally prevents holdings from being compact blocks. If a man dies leaving four sons and four separate fields, they do not each take a field but a quarter of each field; holdings consequently often consist of small scattered plots of land. Conditions vary in different provinces and the average size of the holding is often considerable,<sup>1</sup> but in congested areas many holdings are only sufficient to yield a bare subsistence or are so small as to be uneconomic. The Indian peasant is unfortunately dependent on the land alone, unlike his fellow in Japan or the old English peasantry, which obtained its living partly from tillage and partly from domestic industries, the incomes from the two sources being supplementary to one another. Some relief is obtained by the younger members of a family going out and finding a living elsewhere; in some areas cultivators supplement the meagre income from their small holdings by occasional agricultural labour for others; but in only too many cases the land has to be given up and its occupants are submerged in the class which has the most toil and the least enjoyment of any—the landless and unskilled labourer; it was estimated by the Indian Franchise Committee in 1931 that 25 millions out of 31½ millions of agricultural labourers were landless.

The changes in the systems of land tenures, the juridical rights given to different agrarian classes, the free market in land, and the diminution of the area of estates and holdings have been enough in themselves to transform the economic organization of the rural areas in which the great majority of the people move and have their being. Other changes have been brought about by the play of economic forces due to increased contact with the West and the development of transport between India and western countries as well as between different parts of India. A system which was largely medieval has been subjected to the modern influences of trade and money. The crops which are grown and the prices which agricultural produce commands are no longer determined by local needs, local gluts, and local scarcity, but are responsive to world requirements and are regulated by world prices. Cowry shells which were a form of currency in many parts have ceased to be in circulation,<sup>2</sup> though they were occasionally used for small purchases in remote rural areas in the early years of this century. Rents are chiefly paid in cash, though produce rents still

<sup>1</sup> In 1928 the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India estimated the number of acres per cultivator as: 12·2 in Bombay, 9·2 in the Punjab, 8·5 in the Central Provinces and Berar, 4·9 in Madras, 3·1 in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, 3 in Assam, and 2·5 in the United Provinces.

<sup>2</sup> An editorial article in the *Bengal Herald* of 13 June 1829 stated that cowries were nearly extinct in Calcutta and in the course of a few years would scarcely be seen in Bengal. J. K. Majumdar, *Indian Speeches and Documents on British Rule 1821-1918* (1937), p. 37.

survive in many parts of the country. Artisans and labourers moreover receive wages in money and not in kind, e.g. by shares of the crops or so many measures of rice or other grain, though the latter system is still quite common in some areas for agricultural labourers. Villages are no longer isolated and economically self-sufficient, and the village servants who work for the whole village community are the exception rather than the rule. Their relations with the villagers are now governed by contractual obligation instead of by prescriptive custom, and they have become independent wage-earners working for, and paid by, individual villagers. But the old organization has not altogether disappeared and there are parts, in particular Central India and Rajputana, in which it is almost intact, village servants being remunerated by prescriptive shares of the crops, and the Chamar or tanner by the hides of dead cattle, which are his perquisite and in return for which he supplies the villagers with shoes and leather.

It is some measure of the advance which has been made that in 1837 Macaulay, when drafting the Penal Code, found that there was no law whatever defining the extent of the power of a master over his slaves, and seriously discussed the question whether a distinction should be made between offences committed against freemen and offences committed against slaves, whereas now there is a body of substantive law for the protection of industrial workers based on the modern labour legislation of Great Britain and the principles of the International Labour Conference. But in spite of the advance a species of serfdom still survives. Slavery, which, so far as rural areas were concerned, was mainly agrestic, and which was never like the plantation slavery of the United States of America, was abolished nearly a century ago in British India and a little later in the States. Although it is extinct, there is in some areas a species of debt-slavery, men borrowing money (e.g. to meet the expenses incidental to a marriage) and binding themselves to work for their creditors for periods which may extend to their lifetime or until the loan is repaid, which in practice comes to the same thing, as interest is added to capital and the debtor has no means of liquidating his debt except by lifelong work. In South India many untouchables bind not only themselves but also, not infrequently, their heirs in this way and are practically reduced to the position of serfs fed and clothed by their masters. This form of servitude is also found among members of primitive tribes in the State of Bastar, who repay the loans which they receive from Hindu immigrants by agricultural labour; here too it is common, when a man dies leaving his debt unpaid, for his son to assume his obligation and work as a *kabadi*, i.e. a lifelong servant. The same



system of bondmanship was also common until a comparatively recent date in parts of the province of Bihar, where the bondmen are known as *kamias*. In the district of Palamau it was estimated that the *kamias* and their dependents numbered 60,000 out of a total population of 700,000, and in the north-west of Hazaribagh, where the tenancy law was a dead letter, the mass of the people were described as having been reduced to economic dependence owing to the widespread dispossession of tenants, who became *kamias* and continued to till for their landlord masters the fields which they had once held themselves.<sup>1</sup> This practice was, however, made illegal in 1920 by an Act (the *Kamianti* Agreements Act) under which no agricultural labourer may bind himself or his family to work for a particular master for a particular wage for more than one year. In the State of Hyderabad a similar measure known as the Bhagale Act is in force, under which this practice is forbidden and only voluntary annual contracts are allowed. Debt-slavery is also an age-old system in Gujarat where the 'debt-slaves' are known as *dublas*. They are landless agricultural labourers to whom landholders advance loans, which they repay by lifelong service; the landholders provide them with food and clothing and they are liable to be transferred from one to another like chattels. There has, however, been a movement for the abolition of the system, and in 1939 on what is known as Independence Day it was resolved at a meeting of some 10,000 agriculturists, which was attended by Mr. Gandhi, to put an end to it and in future to pay labourers of this kind cash wages.

To sum up, it may be said that the position is very complex and it is not easy to evaluate precisely the effects of western influences and to say to what extent the peasant has been affected for better or for worse, more especially as the information about his previous economic state is scanty. His position has improved in one way in consequence of the fixation of tenures and the grant of transferable rights, which are the direct result of British rule, but this is not all gain, for the acquisition of marketable rights, by increasing his credit, has tended to increase his indebtedness. He has no longer to fear the devastations of war or starvation by famine. The course of the last century has shown unmistakably that he has greater resources and is far more capable of withstanding the effects of crop failures: as stated in Chapter II, famine relief has become more of the nature of poor law relief. He has greater security of life and property. His rights are protected by law and he has greater security of tenure. He has more freedom of movement and a wider market for his crops and his labour, but on the other hand

<sup>1</sup> *Bihar and Orissa: Decennial Review (1910-22) of the Administration and Development of the Province* (Patna, 1923), pp. 207, 209.

he has to face keener and more extensive competition, and he now has wants which it is not always easy to supply. The growth of population which has been enabled by the *Pax Britannica* has moreover increased the pressure on the soil, and the pressure has not been appreciably relieved by agricultural improvements and a consequent increase of productive capacity. Another consequence has been a *morcellement* of holdings, which in many cases have been reduced below the subsistence level, but for this the Hindu law governing the succession to and division of property is undoubtedly also responsible.

It is open to question whether the changes in urban life have been so great and far-reaching. There have manifestly been many changes. Old cities and towns, which owed their importance to political and economic conditions which have passed away, have decayed, chiefly because of the disappearance of the courts of sovereign rulers and princes, and of the industries and fine arts which they fostered, and because of the diversion of trade to the railways from the rivers on which they were built. A case in point is Murshidabad, a former capital of Bengal, of which Clive wrote after the battle of Plassey that it was a city 'as extensive, populous, and rich as the city of London with this difference that there are individuals possessing infinitely greater property than in the last city'. On the other hand, seaports like Calcutta and Bombay have grown by leaps and bounds; some places like Jubbulpore and Delhi have gained or maintained their importance because they have become railway centres, while the latter has again become the seat of government; a new class of town, the industrial town, such as Jamshedpur and the mill-towns along the river Hooghly, has come into existence. Some cities reproduce many of the features of western urban life. Suburban towns tend to become dormitories, from which motor-buses and suburban train services bring hosts of black-coated and other workers every morning and to which they return every evening. The streets hum with motor traffic—taxis, private cars, lorries, and buses—which make their way along them together with the bullock-cart, moving at the rate of two miles an hour, which is characteristic of old India. There is a garish mixture of East and West, seething bazaars, in which little one-storied thatched or tiled huts are huddled together in narrow alleys, and at the same time broad thoroughfares and towering concrete and masonry buildings of western architecture, blocks of flats, shops with plate-glass windows, and factory chimneys smirching the sky with smoke. There are the modern amenities of life and forms of entertainment, such as cinemas thronged by thousands every night, wireless sets in private homes, football matches which attract scores of thousands, and horse races



to which hundreds of thousands go. In several cities improvement trusts of a western type have been established and methods of scientific town planning brought into operation, but there are also crowded and insanitary slums. Conditions are particularly bad in Bombay owing to the circumscribed limits of the island on which it is built; here nearly 800,000 people, or three-quarters of the population, live in one-roomed tenements with an average of four persons to the room.

Another notable change has been the growth of a middle class. The formation of such a class appears to have attracted notice in 1829, when an editorial article in an Indian-owned paper, the *Bengal Herald*, pointed out that, owing to the rise in the value of land, a class of society which was hitherto unknown, intermediate between the aristocracy and the poor, had sprung into existence and was daily growing in influence. Previous, it said, to its formation 'the wealth of the country was in the hands of a few individuals, while all others were dependent on them, and the bulk of the people were in a state of abject poverty of mind and body. . . . It is the dawn of a new era.'<sup>1</sup> The creation of this class was ascribed to the increase in land values and the consequent increase of wealth acquired by owners of landed estates and urban property, but it also included members of different professions, some of which were due entirely to the British connexion with India. There was no legal profession in pre-British India except in Portuguese Goa, and there was no such thing as a printed newspaper with a staff of journalists, though there were writers of manuscript news-letters. Civil engineering as a profession for Indians may be said to have been inaugurated by the establishment in 1848 by James Thomason of the engineering college at Rurki which bears his name, and the number of railway, mechanical, and electrical engineers trained on western lines, besides civil and irrigation engineers, is now so great that it is difficult for them all to find openings.

#### PRIMITIVE TRIBES

The contacts with the primitive tribes have been of a somewhat peculiar character owing to their low level of economic and cultural development. The term is one of wide connotation, and there are 22½ millions, approximately 7 per cent. of the population, to which it is applied. Here it is proposed only to refer to the larger tribes occupying extensive and on the whole fairly well-defined blocks of territory in the hills, valleys, and plateaux of Assam, Chota

<sup>1</sup> J. K. Mazumdar, *Indian Speeches and Documents on British Rule 1821-1918* (1937), p. 36.

Nagpur and the Santal Parganas, Central, and West India. These, in spite of many modifications of their religious, social, and economic life, still maintain tribal customs, animistic cults, and customary personal law, and still, to a diminishing extent, speak tribal languages. There are also many small tribes or remnants of tribes, mostly of no great numerical strength, of which some live in scattered units in the hills and forests, particularly in South India, while others have no distinct tribal territory but are intermingled with the people of the open plains, or have such close contacts with them that they have to a great extent become detribalized. Though of great ethnological interest, they are not of such sociological importance as the larger communities, which have been less affected by encroachments from outside and are still tribal entities.

Wherever primitive races have come into conflict or close contact with more advanced peoples, the former have been unable to hold their own because of their inferiority in mental capacity, military organization, material advancement, and social efficiency. Some have been exterminated, some have degenerated and died out, others have been absorbed by the stronger races. In India there was a long process of conquest and absorption into Hinduism, but the process was far from complete. Many tribes found an asylum in the forest-clad hills, where they lived in comparative isolation and security. Their territories, remote from the centres of population and difficult of access, had no attractions for settlers and were practically valueless for the purposes of revenue. The Muslim conquerors did not overrun them but were content with receiving irregularly paid tributes of diamonds and elephants, or made occasional invasions in order to obtain them. They had no desire to explore the hills or build roads across them, and the idea of ascertaining and developing their mineral resources, or conserving the forests, seems not to have dawned on them. So long as the tribes abstained from raids on the cultivated plains, they were left alone and were able to maintain their tribal system and traditional manner of life without interference or control. In that system there was little cohesion, for the tribes had no central co-ordinating authority but were organized in scattered villages and groups of villages. The Gonds in Central India appear to have reached a higher stage of development, as they had walled towns and irrigation works of some magnitude—probably the work of imported Hindu labour—and were organized in kingdoms, which endured until they were overthrown by the Marathas, after which they became more and more hinduized. Most were merely forest tribes, some peaceful denizens of the jungle, living on the game which they hunted, the meagre crops which they grew, and the



forest produce which they collected, while others were warlike and eked out their slender resources by forays in the plains.

Prominent among the latter were the Bhils, with whom the Marathas waged constant and ruthless warfare, which continued till they themselves were overthrown by the British. The Marathas' attitude was like that of the early American settlers towards the Red Indians; in their eyes the only good Bhil was a dead Bhil, and they did their best to exterminate them by fair fight and treacherous massacre. In 1804 one Maratha governor killed 7,000, in 1806 another accounted for 15,000. Captives were drowned, flung down wells and precipices, mutilated, and subjected to torture. With warlike tribes such as these, which were regarded as public enemies, there was scarcely any contact except that of armed conflict. In other cases, however, there was a certain amount of peaceful penetration, wandering Brahmans converting the chiefs to Hinduism. In this way the Meithei chiefs of Manipur were hinduized about two centuries ago, and their subjects followed their example. There was also some economic penetration. As Dr. Hutton has shown in Chapter XII, there was some influx of settlers into Chota Nagpur, where the Maharaja adopted Hinduism and made assignments of land to Hindu adventurers and followers, with the result that aborigines were ousted from their holdings, which passed into the possession of aliens.

With the establishment of British rule a new set of conditions was created. The tribes were no longer left in isolation but brought under regulation and control by an all-powerful outside authority, which introduced a settled system of government. A state of warfare being incompatible with the *Pax Britannica*, predatory tribes were first subdued and then pacified. They were no longer treated as Ishmaelites, whose hand was against everyone while everyone's hand was against them, but the altruistic principles of Christian civilization were applied. The first of these primitive peoples with whom the British came into contact were the Mal Paharias of the Rajmahal Hills, who, impelled by the desire of plunder or driven by the stress of hunger and want, raided the villages at the foot of the hills and were in their turn subject to savage reprisals. According to a report made by a judge in 1808, a perpetual savage warfare was waged by them against the inhabitants of the plains, and they were proscribed and hunted down like wild beasts, so much so that he was informed that their heads used to be brought in by basket loads.<sup>1</sup> 'A deadly feud', wrote Bishop Heber in 1824, 'existed till within the last forty years, between them and the cultivators of the neighbouring low-lands, they being untamed thieves and murderers, continually making

<sup>1</sup> *Fifth Report (Madras, 1883)*, p. 767.

forays, and the Mohammedan zemindars killing them like mad dogs and tigers whenever they got them within gunshot.<sup>1</sup> Their pacification had begun in 1772, under the orders of Warren Hastings, who sent a small force against them under Captain Brooke with instructions to subdue the hill robbers and induce them to conform to the settled ways of peace by becoming cultivators instead of marauders. Two years later Warren Hastings announced to the Directors of the East India Company that a tract of country which had been considered inaccessible and unknown, and which served only as a receptacle for robbers, had been reduced to government and its inhabitants civilized. As a matter of fact the work had only begun. It was carried on by Captain Browne (1774-8) and brought to consummation by Augustus Cleveland, or Cleveland (1778-84), the last of whom, in the words which Warren Hastings wrote for the inscription on his monument at Bhagalpur,

'without bloodshed or the terror of authority, employing only the means of conciliation, confidence and benevolence, attempted and accomplished the entire subjection of the lawless and savage inhabitants of the Jungleterry<sup>2</sup> of Rajamahall, who had long infested the neighbouring lands by their predatory incursions, inspired them with a taste for the arts of civilized life, and attached them to the British government by a conquest over their minds—the most permanent and the most rational mode of dominion.'

The secret of his success lay in his understanding of, and sympathy with, the people committed to his charge and in his policy of recognizing the authority of tribal chiefs and head-men—a policy which was endorsed in 1796 by a regulation providing that all important cases should be tried by an assembly of tribal chiefs. The result is seen in a report of 1827 which stated that crimes and affrays were few and the people quiet and content, and which ascribed this happy state of affairs to the good policy of making the tribal chiefs solely responsible for the preservation of peace and good order in their territory.

Cleveland was held up as a model and his methods were followed by other British officers, such as Colonel Hall and Colonel Dixon among the Mers, Colonel Ovens and Sir James Outram among the Bhils, and Sir John Campbell and Major Charteris Macpherson among the Kondhs; all of these, like Cleveland, made personal contacts with the different tribes, learnt to understand them, and won their confidence. The keynote of administration was that it should conform to tribal traditions and preserve tribal institutions and customs, subject, however, to the ethical ideas of the West,

<sup>1</sup> *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India* (1847), vol. i, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> Jungle Tarai, an old name for this tract.



which banned such practices as human sacrifice, slavery, and the persecution of witches. Much depended on the personal equation, i.e. the personalities of men who knew and were trusted by these simple people. Those just mentioned had an extraordinary influence, and their memory was cherished long after they had died or departed from the scenes of their labours. In 1824, forty years after Cleveland's death, Bishop Heber found that the people gathered once a year at the monument erected to his memory and held a religious ceremony in his honour. Sir Walter Lawrence tells us that he used to see Mers worshipping every day at the shrine to Colonel Dixon close to his house at Beawar, the capital of Merwara.<sup>1</sup>

The object was to make the tribes themselves the agents of their own civilization. Efforts were made to stimulate education by the establishment of schools, agriculture by the distribution of seeds and implements, trade by means of fairs and bazaars. The chiefs were made responsible for the maintenance of law and order, and among the Paharias, Mers, and Bhils corps of militia were raised which dealt with outbreaks and gave an outlet for martial proclivities. Above all, the authority of tribal chiefs, councils, and head-men was maintained and justice administered by them in accordance with customary law. At a later date (1877-92) a somewhat similar system was introduced in Baluchistan by Sir Robert Sandeman, after whom it is called the Sandeman system. This briefly consists in the government of the tribes, as far as possible in accordance with their tribal customs, through the agency of their chiefs and head-men, who in some cases receive allowances (just as the chiefs and head-men of the Paharias have done since the end of the eighteenth century), and by the employment of local levies for maintaining peace and good order, while disputes between different tribes and individual members of the same tribe are settled by the councils of elders known as *jirgas*. In this way the tribes themselves are given the responsibility for their own development under the supervision of British officers.

With increasing facilities for transport, tribal areas were opened up and there was an inevitable economic clash between the representatives of a civilization with acquisitive propensities and simple races which had none and only desired to keep their country to themselves. This was impossible, as in other parts of the world where primitive races inhabit areas with natural resources which they are incapable of developing. Europeans opened up mines in some areas and tea-gardens in others. Roads and railways were driven across the hills and through the forests. Forests were conserved by the State in the public interest both for the sake of the

<sup>1</sup> *The India we served* (1928), p. 38.

revenue which they yielded and in order to preserve the supply of timber required by the general population and to prevent the injurious and widespread effects of denudation. The forests of India have been well described as the head-works of Nature's irrigation scheme. Their destruction affects the water-supply as well as the climate, as the water precipitated by tropical rainfall no longer percolates the soil and reaches the plains in a gentle flow, but pours down the bare hill-sides in sudden and disastrous floods; while wasteful or ruinous use cuts short the supply of timber, &c., required by the general population. It was necessary therefore to husband the silvan riches of the country, but conservation reduced the limits within which the aborigines could practice the nomadic system of cultivation known as *jhum*,<sup>1</sup> the only method of tillage known to many of them. It also curtailed or took away their hunting-grounds, restricted the grazing-grounds of their cattle, and to a certain extent diminished the supply of forest products on which they relied to supplement their slender resources. Needless to say these deprivations have been bitterly resented; Verrier Elwin tells us in *Leaves from the Jungle* that the Gonds in central India say that the *kali yuga* (the age of darkness and decadence) began when government took the forests from them. In addition to all this, there was in some parts, notably Chota Nagpur and the Santal Parganas, an influx of Hindu and Muslim land-jobbers, traders, and usurers, who took advantage of the economic freedom postulated by British rule, and of the courts of laws which enforced contracts, to exploit simple and unsophisticated aborigines, who were dispossessed of their holdings sometimes by legal process and sometimes by illegal means. The village system in many cases went with the village lands, as aboriginal head-men were displaced and aliens, having no connexion with the tribe, clan, or village, were substituted for them.

In some areas, such as the Kolhan in Chota Nagpur and the Khondmals in Orissa, where government was the sole landlord and there were no intermediate tenures, the landed rights of the aborigines, with which their village system is closely bound up, were safe from encroachment. The position was very different in parts of the country, in particular Chota Nagpur and the Santal Parganas, where the problem was complicated by the intrusion of non-aboriginal landlords. The history of these two tracts has been, in the words of the local government, one of continuous exploitation and dispossession of the aborigines, punctuated by disorder and

<sup>1</sup> This consists of burning down the forest trees and making a clearing in which seeds are sown broadcast or dibbled in. After a few years the soil becomes exhausted and the process is repeated elsewhere. The result is the destruction of tree growth, the place of which is taken by useless scrub.



even rebellion, until special and adequate protection was given.<sup>1</sup> For a long time no protective measures were taken owing largely to ignorance of tribal languages and systems of land tenures by local administrative officers, and even more perhaps the introduction of a legal system and standardized form of administration like those in force in more advanced districts. In order to vindicate their rights, the tribes rose from time to time in rebellions, such as the Kol rebellion of 1831 and the Santal war of 1855. Intending only to kill and expel the Hindu and Muslim landlords, land-jobbers, and usurers who preyed on them, they found themselves committed to a hopeless fight with spears and axes, bows and arrows against the forces of government armed with weapons of precision.

Hopeless though such struggles were, they drew attention to the grievances of the aborigines and secured for them protection which they would not otherwise have received. Protection was afforded by a specialized system of administration, the exclusion of laws suited only to people in a more advanced stage of civilization, registration of rights in land, and special legislation preventing *inter alia* the transfer of land to non-aborigines and limiting the rate of interest on loans. Legislative and administrative measures of a similar character have been adopted in other provinces, and officers charged with the protection and promotion of the aborigines' welfare have been appointed, e.g. Backward Class Officers in Bombay, Cochin, and Travancore and the Labour Commissioner in Madras. Although the Acts enacted for their benefit have been frequently circumvented, they have served as a bulwark against attacks on their rights, and in the areas where these laws are in force the aborigines have escaped the fate of their fellows in unprotected areas, who have lost their lands and suffered economic degradation by being reduced to the status of landless labourers.

The protection of aborigines has been due to the application of the humanitarian principles of the West by a western government, acting on the dictates of its own conscience and its sense of obligation towards backward races, and not in response to a demand from any section of the community except the aborigines themselves. For some time past, however, a consciousness of responsibility for them has begun to dawn on the minds of educated Indians. In Bombay the legislature has taken a sympathetic interest in them and local bodies have taken measures to improve their condition. On the other hand, according to a statement made by the government of Bihar and Orissa in 1935, the legislature of that province has taken little interest in the backward

<sup>1</sup> *Government of India Act, 1935: Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas*, Cmd. 5064 (1936), p. 106.

tribes except to press for the removal of existing forms of protection; the Indian National Congress has taken no interest in them except to exploit them for political purposes; and local bodies have usually been far more anxious to provide for non-aboriginal than for aboriginal needs except in a few districts where the aboriginals themselves have effective representation on them. In this province an Indian officer in charge of one district where two-thirds of the population consists of aboriginals states that during three years he never heard a single public man utter a word of concern for them or refer to the necessity of local bodies taking measures for protecting their interests or assisting in their development.<sup>1</sup> The general public are indifferent to their welfare, regarding them as savages or barbarians outside the pale of Hinduism, with whom those within the pale have no concern. Their feeling resembles that of the Greeks towards the barbarians, one of contempt for beings having a lower order of intelligence and standing at a lower level of civilization, accompanied, in some cases, by a sense of antipathy and of positive repugnance. For example, Hindus and Muslims alike are said to look on the Garos of Assam as little better than animals; the pollution they cause is so great that Hindu barbers refuse to cut the hair of missionaries contaminated by association with them.<sup>2</sup>

As might have been expected with such a medley of widely scattered, disparate races, the effects of the impact of civilization have varied according to the nature and extent of the influences brought to bear on different tribes, such as the development of communications, economic penetration, protection by government, immigration from outside, and also the emigration of aboriginals, whether to hew coal in coal-mines, work as labourers in tea-gardens and rice-fields, or serve as scavengers in the streets of great cities. There are few which have not been affected in one way or another. Some were even swept up in the whirlwind of the Great War; there were labour corps of Santals and Nagas in France and Mesopotamia, and a battalion of Jharwas (meaning men of the jungle), which was raised in Assam, served in Mesopotamia. In some cases the changes in religious beliefs, social customs, and general manner of life have been so slight as to be negligible. There are still a few tribes in the States which live in isolation, fly from strangers, practise primitive methods of cultivation, and hunt game with spears, bows, and arrows. Tribes such as these cannot be said to be affected in any way by western influences, either direct or derivative, by the British system of government, or by the

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 107, 119.

<sup>2</sup> *Government of India Act, 1935: Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas*, Cmd. 5064 (1936), pp. xii-xiii, 231.



economic contacts it has enabled. One such is the tribe of Juangs or Patuas (meaning people of the leaves or leaf-wearers) in the Orissa States. An attempt was made in 1871 to introduce the outward garb of civilization by getting the women to discard the girdle of leaves which was their only dress and wear cotton cloth in its stead. Those who came within the sphere of British influence, we are told, were clothed by order of the government, and their chief was persuaded to do the same good work for others. An English officer called a meeting of the tribe, made a speech, and solemnly handed out pieces of cloth to the women, to the number of nearly 2,000, after which the leaves which had clad them were gathered in a heap and burnt.<sup>1</sup> Little has since been heard of the tribe, but a first-hand account given in 1931 by Mr. Vivian Meik in *The People of the Leaves* shows that, in the State of Rairakhol at least, they are at the nadir of primitivism. He lived for some time among them and found that they still wore leaves and nothing else, lived from day to day on the fruit which they gathered from the forest in which they lived and on the roots which they grubbed up either with their hands or with pieces of flint, like men of the Stone Age, could not count above five, and in their sexual relations observed no table of kindred or affinity but were more like animals. As for western influences they had not even a conception of the existence of Europeans except in a legendary kind of way.

Tribes, notably the frontier tribes in Assam, living in areas where there has been little immigration, have maintained economic independence, while their tribal institutions have been preserved to the utmost limit compatible with a modern system of government, the authority of their chiefs and head-men being maintained as part of the administration. They are in a very different position from tribes in the interior which have had more and closer contacts with the people of the plains. Some of the latter tribes have been able to preserve, in a large measure, their social customs and personal law, but there is generally a gradual disintegration owing to economic pressure and the infiltration of Hinduism. This steadily and surely permeates into tribal strongholds, assisted by education, which, it has been observed, turns the thoughts of its recipients to Hinduism. Some tribes have been already absorbed into Hinduism and have lost tribal identity. Among others the process is in operation, some sections having become hinduized and detribalized, others remaining animistic and tribal; three-fourths of the Bhils and one-half of the Gonds are now Hindus. In the ten years ending in 1931 one and a half millions changed their tribal religions for the Hindu faith. The adoption of Hinduism necessarily involves a change of social system. It also leads

<sup>1</sup> W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Empire* (1893), p. 94.

in some cases to the loss of the tribal language; in the case of one tribe which is partly Hindu and partly animistic, nine-tenths of the hinduized section have given up the use of the language of their forefathers, while it is retained by three-fourths of those who adhere to animistic cults. It appears, however, that tribal languages are not necessarily submerged by the advancing tide of Hinduism. They are replaced by Aryan languages where there is little or no economic independence, but where this exists, with a consequent social consciousness, the tribal languages survive hinduization. To this the last Census Commissioner of India, Dr. Hutton, ascribed their obvious vitality in eastern India in spite of rapid hinduization.<sup>1</sup> The influence of Christianity is less widely felt, simply because of the paucity of missionaries who have only been able to work in selected areas, but with some remarkable results; one-half of the Lushais and one-fifth of the Mundas and Oraons have been converted to Christianity. Christianity is no less a solvent of tribal solidarity than Hinduism, but it is not so destructive of tribal languages, which have, on the contrary, become more firmly established by being reduced to writing by missionaries.

Some of the aims of early administrators have been realized. Predatory tribes have adopted the settled ways of peace; internecine wars and blood-feuds, such as were once the rule of life among the Nagas and Bhils, have ceased. This, however, is not all gain, for a loss of self-respect and stamina is noticeable in the case of some tribes, which were formerly proud of their independence and warlike prowess and wistfully regret their loss of manhood and freedom. Other tribes, however, have welcomed the change. The Kondhs still sing songs expressing their gratitude to Sir John Campbell and Major Charters Macpherson for the era of peace which they inaugurated some ninety years ago. Their country, it is related, was in darkness; murder, bloodshed, and rapine were rife; but Kaibon (Campbell) Saheb brought it from darkness to light, put a stop to murder and bloodshed, and made the land beautiful. After him came Modokella (Macpherson) Saheb, who built schools, so that the people acquired wisdom and riches.<sup>2</sup>

Barbarous customs have been abolished and the people have gradually acquiesced in their abolition, though there have been occasional relapses. Old beliefs die hard, and during the Mutiny of 1857-8, when the British evacuated their district, the Hos took advantage of the disappearance of authority to kill off all men and women suspected of sorcery and witchcraft. In 1882, when the Kondhs of the State of Kalahandi rose in rebellion because they

<sup>1</sup> *Report on the Census of India, 1931*, part i, vol. i, p. 352.

<sup>2</sup> J. E. Friend-Pereira, 'Some Khond Songs', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, part iii, 1899.



were being ousted from their lands by Hindu immigrants, they revived the old ceremony of human sacrifice, killing captives and hacking off pieces of their flesh, which they buried in the fields as an offering to the earth-goddess which would ensure their fertility. In 1907 again the Kondhs of the Agency Tracts of Madras presented a petition to the District Magistrate during a period of drought and scarcity begging him to sanction the renewal of the rite. These, however, are exceptions to the general rule of acquiescence. The Kondhs are content to sacrifice buffaloes instead of men; head-hunting Nagas decorate their houses with pumpkins instead of human heads and are satisfied with decapitating calves or puppies or slicing off the tops of wooden posts.<sup>1</sup>

Other aims have not been realized. Improved methods of agriculture have been accepted in some cases, but there has been little industrial advance, the general level of education is very low, and the great majority are illiterate and ignorant. Education, however, though handicapped by the fact that in many cases the medium of instruction is an Aryan language and not the mother tongue, has made some advance, especially in tracts where Christianity has spread; the Christian convert is as ready as his unbaptized brother is reluctant to learn. Some tribesmen, as e.g. among the Kolis and Bhils of Bombay and the Mundas of Chota Nagpur, have advanced sufficiently to be able to obtain employment as school-teachers and clerks and to serve on local bodies. In Assam a Khasi has, as Dr. Hutton points out, risen to the position of a Minister in the local government, but the Khasis are in many ways a peculiar people and have far outstripped others in the progress to civilization. They practise matriarchy, the mother and not the father being the head of the family and also in some parts the sole owner of property. They have a spirit of enterprise which is not met with in other tribes, and have shown unusual powers of receptivity, readily adapting themselves to, and taking advantage of, new conditions. They are singular among the tribes in being keen traders. They took up the cultivation of potatoes when it was introduced over a century ago, and they now own extensive orange groves. There has moreover been a mass movement to Christianity, and they have taken kindly to education and acquired a creditable degree of literacy. Other tribes lag behind them in material advancement, being slow to adopt new occupations, having scarcely any industrial bent, and leaving trade to outsiders. Taken as a whole, they seem to lack the mental equipment and acumen necessary for a competitive life and to be unable to adjust themselves

<sup>1</sup> Head-hunting, like suttee and human sacrifice, had religious associations, being rooted in a belief that the souls of the victims added to the soul-force of a village and promoted the productivity of the soil and the welfare of the people.

to new conditions and hold their own against a more highly organized economic order.

Not only has contact with civilization done little for their development, but it has caused a certain amount of degeneration. All who have had relations with them have been impressed by their essential honesty and truthfulness when living in seclusion and observing the laws of their own society and by the loss of those virtues when they become more sophisticated and civilized. They themselves acknowledge a moral decline, which they attribute to contact with foreigners, i.e. Hindus and Muslims; the Santals, for example, declare that they have learnt to steal and lie from the Hindu 'cats'. Drunkenness is a vice which has not been imported by modern civilization but which has increased under its influence. Hard drinking is an immemorial feature of tribal life in India, but it was largely seasonal and periodic, e.g. carouses synchronized with the flowering of the *mahua* tree (*Bassia latifolia*) from which a spirit is distilled, and religious festivals at different times of the year were the occasion for debauches. But home-brewed liquor is neither so potent nor so stupefying as excise liquor; a man drinking the former to excess may be drunk for a day but not incapacitated for days together. The evils of drunkenness are apparent to the tribes themselves and occasionally prohibition movements are launched. Thus, in 1908 the Kondhs of the Khondmals in Orissa took a vow of total abstinence, and two years later, finding that they could not resist temptation so long as there were liquor shops at hand, presented a memorial begging government to close them all on the ground that drink was impoverishing them and causing their ruin. This request was granted.

Education has to a certain extent helped to enlarge ideas, and it has had the practical advantage that those who can read and write are no longer so much at the mercy of landlords, whose underlings are unable to fob off fraudulent rent-receipts on them. On the other hand, it is apt to make them out of touch with their environment, and, as already stated, it predisposes them to Hinduism. The adoption of the latter is in some respects a gain. It is the first step to a more sober life, for Hinduism discourages immoderate indulgence in liquor, and it involves the recognition of the standards of a civilized morality. But it also impairs the solidarity of the tribe; it tends to destroy the sanctions on which morality rested and the taboos which were its safeguard; it involves a loss of personal dignity and freedom. The unreclaimed aboriginal has no inferiority complex but is sturdy and independent, acknowledging no Hindu as his superior; he practises adult marriage, and he is free from the Hindu taboos on food and drink. The admission of the superiority of Hinduism is the beginning of a decline



of independence, and he eventually sinks to the level of the depressed classes, is tied by the shackles of the caste system with its irrational conventions and dietary restrictions, and copies the less desirable customs of the lower castes, such as child marriage.

On a general survey it may be said that the history of the primitive tribes since the inception of British rule is a somewhat distressing record of the effects of an alien civilization impinging on simple and backward peoples. In a few cases these effects have been so destructive as almost to cause extinction, as for instance among the Andamanese and Todas mentioned in Chapter XII. Other tribes, however, have increased and multiplied, and the fact that there are still over 20 millions coming under the category of primitive tribes speaks for itself. The civilization with which they have come into contact has been mainly Indian and not western. The chief villain of the piece has been the Indian rather than the European. As Dr. Hutton points out, it is owing to the opening up of their country, to the exploitation and settlement of outsiders, that the hill tribes have probably experienced the greatest detriment. They suffered from victimization and spoliation by Indian traders and agriculturists, oppressive landlords and grasping usurers. The process of disintegration was assisted by the infiltration of Hinduism. For these external influences British rule was ultimately responsible as it facilitated contacts with tribes which had hitherto been unaffected or only slightly affected by them. At the same time the British government was itself directly responsible for much that was either beneficial or harmful. Its western methods of administration, its law courts, its conservation of forests, and, to some extent, its excise policy all affected tribal life. It pacified predatory tribes, led them into settled ways of peace, and abolished barbarous customs. The administrative system was, it is true, often framed, in Dr. Hutton's words, without reference to the interests of the tribesmen and in ignorance of, or indifference to, their special needs and tribal customs. But honest and conscientious efforts were made to remedy mistakes when they were realized and to adjust the system to their circumstances. For the isolation which had been their defence against encroachment the government substituted the protection of special laws. To the latter many tribes owe the preservation of their landed rights, though undoubtedly others lost them in whole or in part, owing to the failure of government to apply protective measures either in due time or in due measure. It must at any rate be put down to its credit that it recognized its responsibility for their welfare and constituted itself their guardian, and on the transfer of power to governments responsible not to the British Parliament but to elected represen-

tatives of the Indian people, it took measures to secure the continuance of its policy by conferring on Governors of provinces a special responsibility for their protection and by constituting, for the larger tribes at least, areas in which a simpler form of administration more suited to their needs is in force.

Among other direct European influences, mention should be made of the work done by European missionaries, which has been a power for good and a civilizing influence of the highest kind, though it has tended to destroy tribal solidarity. *Inter alia*, wherever it has penetrated, Christianity has put an end to devil-worship and the orgies of drunkenness and sexual debauch which accompanied harvest and hunting festivals. It has brought a higher standard of morals and the enlarging ideas of education; it has assisted in economic betterment. In this connexion, reference may be made to a special branch of work among what are called criminal tribes. These are tribes with whom crime—dacoity, theft, and burglary in particular—is an hereditary occupation. Among the Sansis of North India, for example, every man, woman, and child is a thief by birth and profession. The government was obliged to take measures to protect the general public against these predatory communities and in 1871 passed the Criminal Tribes Act for their regulation and control. Attempts were made to reclaim them by means of agricultural and industrial settlements, to which a certain number were relegated, but the efforts to turn them into honest men failed. The criminal tribes were extraordinarily difficult to deal with. In one case, when they were given land, they asked for cattle, and when cattle were given, they sold them. They next asked for seed and ate it. In another colony the land could only be tilled by hired labour, for which government paid. The difficulty in dealing with them was enhanced by the fact that they are untouchables with whom no Hindu of good caste will willingly come into close personal contact, and also no doubt by the fact that they themselves felt that the object was not redemption but repression. There was, in fact, more discipline and control than reclamation and reform. Government was baffled by the problem until in the early years of the twentieth century it began to make use of the services of the Salvation Army. The inmates of settlements at last began to realize that these were not penal institutions. The Salvation Army officers lived among them and exercised a personal and humanizing influence, to which the criminal tribes responded. Describing his visit to one settlement Mr. Harold Begbie remarks: 'The least imaginative man, I think, could not fail to be struck if he saw these Bhatias, these former murderers, burglars and dacoits, working intelligently at the looms, peacefully cultivating the land, and learning with pleasure and delight to be



dairymen and poultry-keepers, under the spell of kindness and the magic of Christian love.<sup>1</sup>

## NATIONALISM

One of the most notable consequences of British rule has been the birth and growth of a spirit of nationalism binding together different races and communities and transcending the barriers caused by a multiplicity of languages, though by no means obliterating the lines of religious cleavage. Such a spirit did not exist when the British appeared on the Indian scene, and the establishment of their dominion was facilitated by its absence. There was a clan spirit among the Rajputs of Rajputana, and there were sectional loyalties or regional nationalisms, as among the Marathas and Sikhs, but no common all-India consciousness or capacity for combined action. Lack of racial, religious, and linguistic homogeneity militated against solidarity, as also did the lack of means of easy and rapid intercommunication; in all countries with poor means of communication life tends to be intensely local. Community of interests and action was, indeed, no more to be expected than in Europe. It is all the more remarkable that a feeling of nationalism should have developed, because India, although it is only as large as Europe without Russia, is more polygot, its religious divisions are sharper, and its civilization is by no means so uniform. On the other hand, its different peoples have not the same sense of racial consciousness or the same separation of economic interests as those of Europe. It is largely on this account that the nationalism of India is very different from the nationalism of Europe. In Europe nations are divided by political animosities, conflicting ambitions, and very diverse interests. Nationalism has accordingly been a disintegrating force, setting nation against nation and preventing international concord. In India it has been a unifying force, operating in a society which is largely sectionalized by religion and caste and is racially far from homogeneous. It has helped to implant in many different peoples a sentiment of unity and national identity transcending regional differences, and so to create a pan-Indian spirit welding them together into a sentient whole. Nationalism in India is, in effect, a quest for nationhood, a desire for a united India, and an ambition for a greater India.

Its birth and growth have been due to a combination of causes. *Imprimis* there has been the pressure of an alien government. John Stuart Mill observed in *Representative Government*:

'When nations which have been divided are under a despotic government which is stranger to all of them, and chooses its instruments

<sup>1</sup> *Other Sheep* (1911), p. 316.

indifferently from all, in the course of a few generations identity of situation often produces harmony of feeling, and the different races come to feel towards each other as fellow countrymen, particularly if they are dispersed over the same tract of country.'

In India such a feeling has been produced by the unifying force of British rule. It has been fed by memories of the past, when India was ruled by her own sons. There has been a natural antipathy to the domination of a foreign race, with which there was no fusion, and a feeling that it deprived Indians of that sense of self-respect which is common to self-governing peoples. Talk of 'the white man's burden' irritated Indians, who compared their position to that of Sinbad carrying the old man of the sea. The *Pax Britannica* created the conditions necessary for the growth of national consciousness and for uninterrupted political development. English education instilled ideas of nationhood and political freedom, to which the Press gave voice and for which it secured wide circulation. Widely separated territories and communities found a common tongue in the English language and were brought into closer touch by railways, the post, and the telegraph.

The spirit of nationalism has found expression both in the form of cultural nationalism, described in the section on 'The Clash of Cultures', and in that of political nationalism, with which this section will mainly deal. The former has shown reaction against western influences, the latter sympathetic response to them. It owes much to the study of national movements in the West and of English literature, which is variously called the literature of revolt and, more justly, the literature of freedom.

'On the political side', writes one of the nationalist leaders, 'Indian nationalism has been inspired and strengthened by the forces of European nationalism . . . The nationalist calendar of great men followed by Young India contains such names as those of Washington, Cavour, Mazzini, Bismarck, Kossuth, Emmett, Parnell, by the side of Partap, Ramdas, Guru Govind Singh, Sivaji, Tipu Sultan and the Rani of Jhansi.'<sup>1</sup>

Not only the ideas but the technique and phraseology of western political movements were borrowed unstintingly; all was grist that came to the nationalist mill. The western machinery of agitation was set to work through the newspapers, platform oratory, pamphleteering, mass meetings, monster petitions, &c. Political associations were formed with names adopted or adapted from the West, such as the National Congress and the Home Rule League. A terrorist movement, separatist in its aims and criminal in its methods, was set on foot which copied Russian nihilist methods of

<sup>1</sup> Lajpat Rai, *Young India: An Interpretation and a History of the Nationalist Movement from Within* (1917), p. 181.



organization and justified its outrages by Mazzini's gospel of political assassination and Kossuth's gospel of violence. The latest instance of imitativeness is the pledge taken by members of the National Congress on 'Independence Day' (26 January), which is largely inspired by the American Declaration of Independence, as may be seen from the extracts printed below.<sup>1</sup>

With all this receptivity of western ideas and practice, there was an underlying and deep-rooted antagonism to the West on the part of both reactionaries and radicals. This was demonstrated by the repercussions in India of the victory of Japan in the Russo-Japanese war, which, in the words of Indians, thrilled and electrified the country. The enthusiasm it aroused showed very clearly the existence of a pan-Asiatic spirit—what Meredith Townsend called a comity of Asia,<sup>2</sup> a disposition to believe that Asia belongs of right to Asiatics and to take pleasure in any event which brings that right nearer to realization. It was acclaimed as the triumph of the East over the West, of an oriental David over a western Goliath, and was taken to be a practical and signal refutation of the claim of western superiority. The moral drawn from it was that India, like Japan, might grow to her full stature as a nation and win a seat of honour among the nations. And it has been pointed out that it was from this time that the term 'Indian nationalism', which so far had had little currency, came into common use.<sup>3</sup>

A few years after the final downfall of the Maratha power Sir John Malcolm warned the officers serving under him in Central India that, though the power of the British owed much to the contrast between the moderation of their rule and the oppression to which the country had been subject, this source of strength was bound to disappear gradually as the memory of past misgovernment faded. Men had forgotten their feelings of patriotism in the contemplation of their present security, but those feelings must gradually be revived and brought into action by the knowledge which it was the duty of the British to impart, while the unifying

#### <sup>1</sup> *National Congress Pledge*

We believe that it is an inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it.

#### *American Declaration of Independence*

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter it or abolish it.

<sup>1</sup> *Asia and Europe* (1905), p. xviii.

<sup>2</sup> See S. K. Datta, *Asiatic Asia* (1932), p. 97.

effect of their system of government was bound to make the people more accessible to those common motives of action which are the foundations of union.<sup>1</sup> Sir John Malcolm's remarks referred to the territories which had been under Maratha rule, but they are of general application, and the course of events has justified his prediction. At first the people welcomed the cessation of chronic disorder and the security afforded by good government, but the liquidation of turmoil and insecurity became a wasting asset. In course of time familiarity dulled the edge of appreciation. Relief and content gave place to discontent among the upper classes, who dwelt on the loss they had sustained by British ascendancy and contrasted their exclusion from positions of authority with the influence and power which they had formerly exercised.

'Our government', wrote a young civil servant in 1832, 'is, so far as the natives are concerned, a pure despotism, one of the most cheerless and uninviting kind. All offices of trust and power are held by Europeans. The natives are protected from oppression, it is true, and they enjoy under our laws many advantages which they never dreamt of under their own tyrannical rulers; but, if they have nothing to dread, they have at the same time nothing to look forward to.'<sup>2</sup>

A more liberal policy was pursued after 1833, but the reins of government were kept in British hands and the measures taken to associate Indians with the administration were not sufficient to quench smouldering discontent, which broke into flame in the Mutiny.

There were up to this time two currents of thought having their source in a feeling of nationalism, one Indian and revolutionary, the other western and constitutional. Attention was drawn to them in 1838 by Sir Charles Trevelyan in his brochure *On the Education of the People in India*, in which he remarked on the contrast between the ideas prevalent in a place like Delhi, where English education had not been introduced, and in Bengal, where it had begun to influence thought. In the former, owing to the absence of any attempt to alter the current of feeling, the national habits of thinking remained unchanged. The upper classes cherished the idea of regaining power and authority, the lower of having avenues of wealth and distinction opened to them. High and low, rich and poor, had only one idea of improving their political condition, viz. the expulsion of the British *vi et armis* and the re-establishment of an Indian form of government. On the other hand, in Bengal those who had received an English education and become imbued with the political conceptions which it conveyed, aimed at constitutional development on western lines.

<sup>1</sup> *Memoir of Central India* (1823), vol. ii, pp. 434, 436.

<sup>2</sup> An unpublished letter.



They desired peaceful evolution instead of violent revolution and looked forward to a gradual constitutional development and the eventual establishment of a national representative assembly. Both these schemes, as Trevelyan pointed out, presupposed the termination of British rule, but while its sudden and violent overthrow was a necessary preliminary to the one, the other postulated the gradual withdrawal of British domination as the people became fit to govern themselves. He ascribed the difference between the two conflicting views solely to the influence of English education on the one side and its absence on the other, and did not perhaps give sufficient consideration to the fact that Bengal had long been a subject country and its people had not the same spirit of independence as those of Hindustan, where Indian rule had not long passed away and the titular emperor still maintained a diminished dignity at Delhi, which had for centuries been the seat of imperial power and imperial splendour.

He himself held that the existing connexion between Great Britain and India could not, in the nature of things, be permanent. No effort of policy could prevent the people recovering their independence. The only thing to do was to secure a gradual and peaceful transfer of power by means of English education. This would be a political education. The educated class, at first a minority, would in course of time become a majority, and political institutions would have to be adapted to their increased capacity for self-government. 'The change will thus be peaceably and gradually effected; there will be no struggle, no mutual exasperation; the natives will have independence after first learning how to make a good use of it; we shall have exchanged profitable subjects for still more profitable allies.' This was not an isolated expression of opinion. Jacquemont, who was in India from 1829 to 1832, found that those who urged the introduction of English education said openly that the British supremacy could not be eternal and that it was a duty of humanity to prepare India to govern herself by raising the moral and intellectual capacity of the people by means of English education. 'Such', he said, 'is the reforming spirit of our times that one often hears this language even on the lips of the officers of the English government.' Views of this kind, openly expressed in India and given wide circulation by Trevelyan's brochure, cannot have failed to awaken a response among the Indian literati quite apart from other impelling motives.

The reactionary type of nationalism was strongly in evidence during the Mutiny, when various ephemeral forms of government of the old Indian pattern were set up. The King of Delhi, the lineal descendant of the Mughal emperors, was proclaimed

<sup>1</sup> *Letters from India 1829-1832*, translated by C. A. Phillips (1936), p. xxv.

Emperor and mandates issued in his name; a governor was proclaimed in Rohilkhand under the old title of Nawab Nazim; Nana Sahib assumed the title of Peshwa. But there was no real unity or sense of Indian nationalism, except in common opposition to the British. Allegiance to the titular emperor was so nominal that he was merely a *roi fainéant*. Nana Sahib's ambition was to re-establish the Maratha empire; the Rani of Jhansi fought for her own hand; various local magnates and petty Rajas assumed independent jurisdiction. After the Mutiny the small party of those who advocated constitutional reform, and whose ultimate objective was the establishment of a western form of national government, grew in numbers and strength. It drew its recruits from the English-educated class, in which ideas of freedom, of nationhood, and of government of the people, by the people, for the people were generated by the study of English and American history and of western political philosophy. As noticed elsewhere, it was common, even as early as 1858, for those who were educated in English colleges to 'acquire in the course of their classic reading a violent nationality (*sic*) and a longing for the liberation of India from a foreign yoke'. Speaking the tongue, reading the books, and sharing many of the ideas of the ruling race, they felt themselves intellectual peers of the British, and resented the domination or tutelage of the latter and the position of inferiority which they themselves occupied.

The British themselves created aspirations culminating in demands which their system of government could not satisfy. The contrast between principle and practice, between the theoretical affirmation of rights and the actual denial of them, was criticized. It was argued that England, whose constitutional history was one of struggle for and attainment of democratic liberty, should do unto others as she would be done by. Capacity for self-government was asserted. The imputation of political incapacity was contested or countered with the argument: 'Assuming that we are not yet fit for representative government, why should we not be allowed to have deliberative assemblies like the Houses of Convocation in the Church of England, so that our opinions may be known before laws are enacted?' Studies of Burke, Bentham, Mill, and other philosophical Radicals were reinforced by observation of contemporary events in Europe, in particular the rise of united Italy. The works of Mazzini became popular among politically minded intellectuals, and the cry of Italy for the Italians found an echo in the cry of India for the Indians. A further stimulus to the movement is said by Lajpat Rai to have been given by the Imperial Durbar of 1877, at which Lord Lytton announced the assumption by Queen Victoria of the title of Empress of India. This, he holds,



raised, in theory at least, the status of Indian subjects of the Queen to that of citizens of the Empire and marked the beginning of the movement which filled the educated Indian with the idea of obtaining his rightful place in the Empire.<sup>1</sup> Others, however, either openly or secretly, advocated a severance of the British connexion by revolutionary violence. It was noticed in the same year that rank treason was preached and a war of independence talked of, and the tone of a section of the Indian Press became so inflammatory that it was brought under control by an Act, which remained in operation for three years (1878-81).

The foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 may be said to have changed the movement from an unorganized aspiration to an organized force, small at first but gradually growing in strength. It owed its origin to the initiative and organizing ability of an Englishman, Mr. A. O. Hume, whose object was to counteract revolutionary tendencies by means of a body working on constitutional lines, which would be a training-ground for parliamentary government and, by diffusing a sense of political consciousness, promote the political regeneration of the country. He was convinced that an association of this kind was necessary as a safety-valve, providing an outlet for forces which might otherwise cause a disastrous explosion. He believed that there was a dangerous state of unrest, due to economic stress among the masses and a bitter anti-government spirit among the educated classes, which might produce a revolutionary rising like the Mutiny. Religious leaders and other responsible persons, with whom Hume was in touch, warned him that India was full of inflammable material which might easily be set ablaze. 'The jungle, they said, is dry and a strong wind is blowing.

'This', he said a few years later, 'is how the case was put to me, and knowing the country and the people as I do—having been through something of the same kind, though on a small scale, in the Mutiny—and having convinced myself that the evidence of the existing state of the proletariat was real and trustworthy, I could not then, and I do not now, doubt that we were then truly in extreme danger of a most terrible revolution.'<sup>2</sup>

There is a somewhat remarkable similarity in the language used at this time both by the Viceroy, Lord Ripon, and by Hume to describe the situation caused by the impact of western civilization.

<sup>1</sup> Lajpat Rai, *Young India: An Interpretation and a History of the Nationalist Movement from Within* (1917), p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> See Sir William Wedderburn, *Allan Octavian Hume* (1913), pp. 179-83. Hume relied on information supplied to the heads of religious sects and orders by their disciples, which he verified himself as far as possible. The reporters were said to number 30,000.

In a despatch proposing a system of local self-government which the former wrote in 1882,<sup>1</sup> he said that a movement had begun which would advance with greater rapidity and force every year. It was necessary to provide an outlet for the ambitions and aspirations which had been created by the education, civilization, and material progress introduced by the British. His language almost recalls the story of Frankenstein and his monster, for he went on to say that new forces had been called into being, which they had hitherto failed to guide and control, and there was a new-born spirit of progress which must be prevented from becoming, either from blind indifference or stupid repression, a source of serious political danger. In the same vein Hume declared that a ferment had been created by western ideas, education, invention, and appliances, which was at work with a rapidly increasing intensity. Its products must be given an overt and constitutional channel of discharge instead of being left to fester under the surface. The British government, by the dissemination of western education and western ideas of liberty, had let loose forces which, unless wisely governed and controlled, might, and indeed certainly must sooner or later, involve consequences too disastrous to contemplate. They must therefore be guided into safe channels while there was yet time.

Both men had similar ideas as to the remedy. Both alike wanted to introduce some means of political education and give the people a training in the working of representative institutions, but they differed as to methods. Ripon thought that the training-ground should be the administration of local affairs in association with the government. Local government, or local self-government, as it is called in India, was, he said, an instrument of popular political education. Hume favoured an outside body, having no connexion with government, which would not be concerned merely with local affairs but discuss, and ventilate views on, all-India questions and so help to create a sense of political consciousness and national unity.

One of the speakers at the first Congress, Mr. Subramania Aiyar of Madras, declared that for the first time in the history of the Indian people there was the phenomenon of national unity, but this must be regarded as the expression of a hope and not as a sober statement of fact. Disunity was sufficiently obvious in 1887 when a Hindu delegate wished to move a resolution in favour of prohibition of cow-killing, which the Muslims would have opposed tooth and nail, and it had to be laid down that no resolution should be moved, and no subject discussed, to which there was unanimous or nearly unanimous objection on the part of

<sup>1</sup> L. Wolf, *Life of the first Marquess of Ripon* (1921), vol. ii, p. 92.



either the Hindu or Muslim delegates. Hume himself admitted that in certain provinces and from certain points of view the movement was premature. The Congress at its first inception and for many years afterwards belied its name, for it was not national in the sense that it was representative of India as a whole. It represented merely the educated portion of India which was liberal-minded and more or less imbued with European ideas. The masses took no interest in it; they wanted agrarian and not political rights.

The attitude of the Muslim community and of the landed and propertied classes, which at first was one of detachment rather than of opposition, changed to antagonism in 1888, when Hume set on foot aggressive propaganda for the political education of the masses. Widespread and intensive agitation of a western type was begun. Lecturers were sent out; over 1,000 meetings were held in towns and villages; pamphlets, tracts, and leaflets were distributed broadcast. One pamphlet, which was translated into twelve different Indian languages, raised a storm. By way of a parable it contrasted two villages, one typifying India under representative government, the other India under the existing system. The former was thriving and prosperous, the latter a scene of misery. Its people were oppressed and grew poorer every day; half their houses were in ruin; their land was going out of cultivation; a picture was given of a British official under the suggestive name of Mr. Zabardast, meaning oppressor. The moral of the parable was that if the people wanted to improve their lot, they must unite and press for representative institutions. The Congress should confine itself to constitutional methods; recourse to violent action must inevitably ruin their cause, whereas by united, patient, and constitutional agitation, they were certain ultimately to gain all that they could reasonably or justly ask for.

Propaganda and publications of this kind caused alarm. It was believed that their effect must be to endanger the peace of India by making the credulous and ill-informed masses think that all their evils were due to the country being governed by the British. Appeals to the populace would produce unrest which might culminate in a second Mutiny. An opposition party was organized among the Muslims by Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan, who vehemently maintained that the Congress movement was a Hindu one, aiming at the establishment of a government which would be English in name but Hindu in reality. If Muslims joined the movement, they would be used as cat's-paws by the Hindus and be the first to suffer if there was an outbreak which government had to crush. He maintained that the lesson of the Mutiny should not be forgotten. The Hindus began it, the Muslims rushed into it, and, being looked on as the spear-head of the attack on British power, had suffered

ever since. They and their noble families were ruined, and this would again be the result if they took part in political agitation.<sup>1</sup>

Although the personnel of the nationalist party was mainly Hindu, it can scarcely be said at this time to have drawn inspiration from Hinduism. The objects of the movement were political and secular and had no suffusion of religious sentiment. Its main-spring was the political thought of western Europe; it framed its programme in accordance with the ideas of Victorian Liberalism; it aimed at reproducing English political institutions and establishing a constitution of western design and construction. Not only were its leaders versed in European political theories, but they always had an eye on Great Britain and endeavoured to gain the co-operation and support of British politicians. Their objective was representative government but in subordination to the imperial parliament. There was no idea of severing the British connexion. On the contrary, its continuance was desired as essential to the welfare of India. The benefits which had followed the establishment of British rule were frankly acknowledged, and the fact was appreciated that India had obtained as a free gift rights which Englishmen had won only after centuries of struggle, such as freedom of speech and petition, liberty of the Press, and religious toleration.

In course of time the feeling changed to one of impatience at the slowness of the advance effected by peaceful methods of agitation and of a resentful bitterness against the British. A section of the Indian Press bubbled with venom. It patently or insidiously advocated violence; a leading member of the Congress party, who was distinguished for frankness, observed at the National Congress of 1887: 'There is a kind of maniacal writing in many of the petty vernacular papers that would qualify, and should qualify, the writers for prison diet.' In the closing years of the nineteenth century an extremist party came into active being which was avowedly revolutionary, and the nationalist movement, as represented by it, was given a religious complexion. The man chiefly responsible for this was Bal Gangadhar Tilak, proprietor and editor of the most influential Marathi newspaper in western India. A champion of orthodox and reactionary Hinduism, he gave nationalism a new meaning taken from Hindu ideology. It was his object to energize the nationalist movement by the dynamic of religion, to move Hinduism from its customary quietism and make it a militant force. Nationalism was not to seek co-operation from outside or have any foreign element. It was to be at once anti-British and anti-Muslim. The Indian-born Muslim was an intruder as well as the

<sup>1</sup> Syed Ahmad Khan, *The Present State of Indian Politics* (Allahabad, 1888), pp. 27-8, 62.



British from the West. Each was the representative of an alien civilization and, as such, each must be attacked and overthrown.

The movement under his leadership was associated with celebrations in honour of the god Ganpati (or Ganesh) and also of the Maratha national hero, Sivaji.<sup>1</sup> The people were urged to follow the example of the latter, who, it was pointed out, had delivered his country by establishing Swaraj (self-government) and religion. An association was formed for military and physical training, which bore the designation of a 'society for the removal of obstacles to religion'. As might be expected, and as was no doubt intended, this mixture of nationalism with religion produced an explosive compound, the aim in view being independence and the means of attaining it revolutionary force and not the path of peaceful progress and constitutional reform followed by the Congress party. The nationalist movement accordingly was now divided between two sections, one reverting to the Indian and revolutionary type, while the other continued on western and constitutional lines.

Many Indian newspapers continued to foster, by direct statements and indirect insinuations, a spirit of bitterness and rancorous hatred of British rule. They constantly inveighed against the government as foreign, selfish, and tyrannical. Nothing good could be said about it. It drained India of its wealth and impoverished the people. India was exploited, emasculated, enslaved by it—to mention common clichés. The godless education which it had introduced destroyed religion. It sought to destroy caste by imports of salt, sugar, and cloth which were polluted by impure matter. The roads and railways, which it built across lines of drainage, and the canals, which spread a sheet of water over the country, produced malaria, from whose ravages, it was alleged, India had formerly been free. What was worse was that it spread plague of malice aforethought by poisoning wells. A later variant of this charge was that plague was raging in London and that the government shipped plague-infested rats to India by P. & O. steamers. The only cure for India's ills was to win independence by driving the British out. It would be a holy war in which true patriots should sacrifice themselves and, if need be, become martyrs. Actually, the holy war was merely a campaign of terrorism and of political assassinations, to counter which special measures were taken against the Indian Press. In 1908 an Act was passed for the prevention of incitements to murder and other offences in newspapers. This was followed two years later by an Act for a more rigorous control of the Press, the mover of which explained that it had been necessitated by the conduct of the most

<sup>1</sup> Sivaji headed a revolt against Mughal rule and set up an independent kingdom, in which he was the defender of the faith, cherishing Brahmans, cows, and caste.

influential and the most widely read section of the Indian Press. These newspapers, he said, 'have prepared the soil in which anarchy flourishes; they have sown the seed and are answerable for the crop. This is no mere general statement; the chain of causation is clear. Not only does the campaign of violence date from the change of tone in the Press, but specific outbursts of incitement have been followed by specific outrages.'

Nationalism became almost a cult followed with religious fervour, and even fanaticism, by a considerable body of Hindus. There was a kind of religious personification of nationalism, which was rapturously referred to as an incarnation of Krishna, the divine saviour of his people. 'The Lord Krishna', it was announced in an article in one paper, 'is our nationality. . . . Nationalism is a divinely appointed *shakti* (i.e. power) of the Eternal.' Members of the terrorist party spent part of their time in reading revolutionary works produced in the West and part in studying Hindu scriptures, and found justification and encouragement in both. The *Bhagavad-gita*, in particular, became a devotional manual, a distorted interpretation being given to its sublime teaching. By a strange perversion, it was represented as giving sanction to assassination and other crimes in the national cause, the mentality for which was created by inculcating the principle of submission to the divine will, and by suggesting that they were in accordance with the *Mayer Lila*, i.e. the inscrutable ways of the divine Mother of the Universe. The murderer of Sir William Curzon-Wyllie (in 1909) said before his execution: 'As a Hindu I feel that wrong to my country is an insult to the gods. Her cause is the cause of Sri Ram; her service is the service of Sri Krishna. Poor in wealth and intellect, a son like myself has nothing else to offer the Mother but his own blood, and so I have sacrificed the same on her altar.'

The Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterji had already given a mystical significance to the idea of the motherland by interpreting the great goddess Durga in her different manifestations as symbolic of national evolution. According to a Bengali nationalist leader, Bipin Chandra Pal, such an interpretation 'imparted a new meaning to the current ceremonialism of the country, and multitudes, while worshipping either Jagaddhatri, or Kali, or Durga, accost them with devotion and enthusiasm, with the inspiring cry of *Bande Mataram*. . . . The transfiguration of these symbols is at once the cause and the evidence of the depth and the strength of the present movement. The wonderful transfiguration of the old gods and goddesses is carrying the message of new nationalism to the women and the masses of the country.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See C. F. Andrews, *North India* (1908), pp. 231, 233.

<sup>2</sup> Bipin Chandra Pal, *The Spirit of Indian Nationalism*, p. 36. *Bande Mataram* means simply 'Hail, Mother'. It was the refrain of a song in one of the novels



A higher note was struck by Swami Vivekananda, the chief exponent of the doctrines called the new Vedantism, who taught that a spiritual awakening was a necessary condition of national greatness. In the words of the same writer:

'Neo-Vedantism demands a social, an economic and a political reconstruction such as will be helpful to the spiritual life of every individual member of the community. The spiritual note of the present nationalist movement in India is entirely derived from this Vedantic thought.'

It has been said by an Indian that the heart of India is eternally religious and cannot understand anything unless it is stated in religious terms. The truth of this dictum was realized by nationalist leaders, who were well aware of the religious bent of Indian psychology. One of them who toured through Bengal from 1900 to 1903, preaching the cause of independence, perceived that a purely political propaganda made no impression and was convinced that an appeal to patriotism would have little force unless it was fortified by appeals to religious sentiment.<sup>1</sup> When, again, an agitation was set on foot in 1905 against the partition of Bengal, with the object of demonstrating national unity against that measure, it was found that national sentiment alone was not sufficient to move the masses. The leader of this agitation accordingly urged that a religious turn should be given to the movement by means of ceremonies in honour of Kali and Sakti;<sup>2</sup> and meetings held in temples and vows to boycott British goods taken in the name of Kali did much to popularize the cause.

In spite, however, of all the efforts which were made, the masses were not really stirred till Mr. Gandhi roused mass emotionalism, partly because of his magnetic personality and reputation for saintliness and partly because of the nature of his utterances, which supplied spiritual motives for collective action. He took some of the religious terms of Hinduism and gave them a political meaning, so that political doctrines were clothed in the phraseology of spiritual conceptions. *Swaraj* or self-government was advocated not only as a political but also as a personal ideal, connoting both the rule of India by Indians and the control of the lower by the *of* Bankim Chandra Chatterji, which was a paean of praise of the motherland comparable to *Die Stem van Suid-Afrika*. Like the latter, it became a kind of national anthem, but as the passage quoted above shows, it had also religious implications, though these were not present in the minds of many of those who joined in singing it.

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Sedition Committee, 1918* (Calcutta, 1918), p. 20. Over thirty years later he said: 'The politician flits across the poverty-stricken ignorance of the villages like some strange animal out of the *Pancha Tantra*. On the other hand when a *sadhu* comes to the villages, the peasants flock to him in awestruck groups and bring him their simple offerings; he typifies for them deliverance and happiness.' Loc. cit., F. Yeats-Brown, *Lancet at Large* (1936), p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> Sir V. Chirol, *Indian Unrest* (1910), p. 341.

higher self. 'Real Home Rule', he announced, 'is self-rule or self-control.' Just as India should work out her own salvation, so every individual man should work out his salvation for himself. Spiritual regeneration should be the prelude to political liberation and engender the moral forces necessary for self-government. The weapons which he recommended for political action were hallowed by religious associations, such as *satyagraha*, or the force of truth, and the doctrine of suffering and sacrifice covered by the term *ahimsa*. This doctrine succeeded where the cult of violence had failed to make an impression. The activities of the Congress party had undoubtedly led to a wider diffusion of political consciousness and to a certain degree of unification on the basis of common political aims, but it was Mr. Gandhi who, as said by an Indian writer, made nationalism a practical and intelligent creed to the masses and converted a movement which had been confined to the intelligentsia into a mass movement.<sup>1</sup>

The religious phase of nationalism is now passing away, and it has become increasingly secularized, though the religious associations connected with the motherland appear to persist, if we may judge from the religious personification of India apparent in the recent erection of a temple near Benares dedicated to Mother India. There is a left group which, taking its ideology from secularist Russia rather than from spiritual India, derides religion as mere religiosity and condemns it as a source of national weakness and a barrier to progress. Others hold up Turkey as an exemplar, pointing to its recovery of independence and power, the progress which it has made, and the reforms which have been effected under the leadership of Kemal Ataturk (Mustapha Kemal). In the words of Rabindranath Tagore, the victorious banner of Turkey is flying high in Asian skies, the sound of the wheels of progress which Kemal Ataturk set going has stirred the ancient soil of India. The death of the latter was the occasion for paeans of praise of his work; in an article by the then President of the National Congress entitled 'Kemal the Patron Saint of Asia', he was eulogized for rescuing Turkey from the slough of political dependence and intellectual degradation and for suppressing blind formalism and overthrowing the orthodoxy which, it was said, is the enemy of true religion.<sup>2</sup>

Nationalism as represented by the Congress did not commend itself to the Muslim community, to whom it seemed to promise the establishment of a Hindu party in a position of dominance. Islam being a religious democracy, democratic principles were not altogether a novelty, but they apprehended that, under a system

<sup>1</sup> K. Kunhikannan, *A Civilization at Bay* (Madras, 1931), pp. 14, 492.

<sup>2</sup> See *New Asia* (Calcutta, 1939), vol. i, no. 1, pp. 7, 77.



of representative government, they would be a permanent minority, their economic and other interests would be sacrificed to those of the Hindus, and their distinctive culture would be in danger of extinction. Moreover, as is explained elsewhere, regional nationality, being opposed to their cherished idea of a world-wide Muslim confraternity, is in their estimation not the highest form of political development. To Indian Muslims the central fact is that they are members of a society which has no territorial limits and which is at once cosmopolitan and exclusive. Their loyalties are therefore largely extra-Indian. On this account they were attracted by pan-Islamism, and later, when that hope proved illusory, by the idea of Islamic internationalism advocated by Sir Muhammad Iqbal.

A reaction has, however, set in owing to the growing realization of the fact that other Muslim countries such as Turkey have become nationally self-centred and take little interest in their coreligionists in India. Muslims are beginning to feel that, for the sake of self-preservation, they must foster and develop a sense of national consciousness, as the Hindus have, and work out their salvation by their own efforts. The phrase 'a Muslim nation in India' has been coined. It is claimed that they should be recognized as a national entity and not as a minority community. There is increasing insistence on the fact that their history, tradition, and social system are fundamentally different from those of other sections of the population, and schemes have been mooted for the constitution of homogeneous Muslim areas in which they could maintain a separate social, cultural, and religious life. A few years ago a *bloc* or federation of States in the north of India was suggested, which was to consist of the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Kashmir, Sind, and Baluchistan, and which was to be known as Pakistan. This proposal was opposed on the ground that it made for separatism and would create a kind of Ulster in India; but recently the idea has been revived in a different and larger form, suggestions being made for a federation of culturally homogeneous Muslim states. At its annual session in 1940 the All-India Muslim League unanimously adopted a resolution that areas where Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the north-west and east of India, should be grouped as an independent State of which the constituent units should be autonomous.

With a few exceptions the Muslims have generally held aloof from the nationalist movement as represented by either the Congress or the terrorist party and have concentrated on promoting their communal welfare and protecting their communal interests. They joined, however, in the demand for self-government, subject

to the provision of safeguards for their separate interests, and in 1916 their central organization, the All-India Muslim League, agreed to take common action with the Congress. This was only a temporary alliance and the concordat was not agreed to by the great body of conservative opinion. In 1919 again an extremist section made common cause with the Congress party during the Khilafat agitation, which was connected with the post-War settlement with Turkey and with the position of the Sultan of Turkey as Khalif, or commander of the faithful, when threatened by the loss of temporal power. There were leaders who announced, when the Afghan war broke out, that it was unlawful to fight against the Amir and a bounden duty to join in a *jihad* or holy war against the English. It was given out that it was a religious obligation to leave India, a land under the domination of non-believers, and undertake a *hijrat* or migration to an Islamic country. This injunction was obeyed by some 20,000 to 30,000 misguided Muslims of the North-West Frontier Province and Sind, who in 1920 sold all that they had, often for a mere song, and moved across the frontier into Afghanistan. Their pilgrimage was a *via dolorosa*. Thousands of the Muhajirin, as they were called, died of hunger, thirst, and exhaustion on the road to Kabul. Of the survivors a few got through to Turkistan; others drifted back to India, ruined and disillusioned. Another and still more disastrous outcome of the Khilafat agitation was the outbreak in the following year of the Moplah rebellion in Malabar, in which the massacre and forcible conversion of Hindus by the fanatical Moplahs wrecked the hopes of a Hindu-Muslim unity which Mr. Gandhi had entertained.

Ten years later another Muslim movement was started in the North-West Frontier Province and joined forces with the Congress party. This was the Red Shirt movement, which presented some curious features due to a combination of motives or influences—anti-British and communist, nationalist and religious, political and economic. At the outset there were signs of communist or Bolshevik influence. Its adherents wore shirts dyed in various shades of red and marched under banners bearing the device of the crossed hammer and sickle with the legend 'Workers and Peasants of the World Unite'. One at least of the leaders of it had been trained at a Soviet centre at Tashkent. Communist ideas were apparent in threats to landowners that they would be expropriated and their land distributed equally among the people. But to the great majority the Bolshevik signs and slogans were merely symbolic of opposition to 'British imperialism', and, as time went on, the hammer and sickle ceased to be insignia of the movement. It became largely economic as well as political—a kind of



*jacquerie*. Its leader announced in 1931 that it had only two purposes: first, to win freedom for the country and secondly to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. In connexion with the first aim, he gave out: 'The Congress is a national and not a Hindu body. It is working as a body against the British. I have therefore joined it and made common cause with it to get rid of the English.'<sup>1</sup> As regards the latter, the economic distress which prevailed at the time was exploited, and there was a vigorous propaganda against the payment of revenue and of the dues levied by government for irrigation. The anti-revenue campaign was perhaps the chief binding force of the movement. At the same time certain Islamic ideas came into play. The designation of *Khudai Khidmatgars*, i.e. servants of God, was adopted, and the idea of an independent Muslim territory gained sympathy from many who did not join in the movement.

With these exceptions the Muslims as a body have been steadfastly opposed to the Congress party, and since the new constitution was inaugurated their opposition has hardened. The form of nationalism which that party represents is repudiated. The Congress is held to be a Hindu body with Hindu aspirations. It is asserted that its object is to establish a totalitarian State on the basis of a single party, that of Hindus. It is complained that since the new constitution has been in operation the interests of Muslims have been subordinated to those of Hindus in provinces which have Congress ministries supported by a dominant Hindu majority, and that the Muslims have been reduced to the position of 'henchmen' or 'camp-followers', or to that which the Sudeten Germans held under the Czechs in Czechoslovakia before 1938. On this and other accounts the breach between them and the Hindus has widened, and their group consciousness has been intensified. Communal separation, the antipathy between the two communities, their conflicting historical and cultural traditions, their divergent sympathies and interests, thus prevent the attainment of full national unity. Religion is still the dominant differential of India, just as race is of Europe.

There are many whose love of their religion is greater than love of their country and whose sentiment is 'I am a Muslim first and an Indian afterwards'. Notwithstanding however his consciousness of membership of a world-wide community, the Indian Muslim, no less than the Hindu, has a deeply rooted love of India and a passionate desire for its well-being. Although he feels the impulse of a more than national life, India is his country, the background of his thoughts and hopes. His deeper loyalties are given to Islam, but his affections centre on his native land. He has, in

<sup>1</sup> See *East India (Emergency Measures)*, Cmd. 4014 (1932), pp. 21, 44.

fact, that form of national spirit which is known as patriotism—a feeling expressed by the President of the All-India Muslim League in 1915: 'When a question concerning the welfare of India and of justice to Indians arises, I am not only an Indian first, but an Indian next and an Indian to the last, an Indian and an Indian alone, favouring no community and no individual, but on the side of those who desire the advancement of India as a whole.'

It is this spirit which has made Indians regard the fortunes of Indians overseas as matters of national concern. Its strength is seen in the intense interest aroused by racial discrimination in South Africa and Kenya and the indignation caused by the disabilities imposed upon Indians. Differentiation of treatment is regarded as derogatory to national self-respect. The grievances of Indians overseas are a common platform on which different political sections unite and join in the demand that they should be recognized as equal subjects of the British Empire.

This higher spirit of nationalism, the selfless love of country which seeks only its good, has animated many who have held aloof from politics. It animated such men as Raja Ram Mohan Ray, the monument on whose tomb at Bristol records his unwearied labours to promote the social, moral, and physical condition of the people of India and his constant zealous advocacy of whatever tended to advance the glory of God and the welfare of man. It was the same spirit that impelled Mr. Justice Ranade to say that it was his ambition to be born again and again in India to work patiently for her uplift.<sup>1</sup> It breathes through the profession of faith contained in the rules of the Servants of India Society, viz.

'Love of country must so fill the heart that all else shall appear as of little moment by its side. A fervent patriotism which rejoices at every opportunity of sacrifice for the motherland, a dauntless heart which refuses to be turned back from its object by difficulty or danger, a deep faith in the purpose of Providence that nothing can shake—equipped with these, the worker must start on his mission and reverently seek the joy which comes of spending oneself in the service of one's country.'

This society was founded, and its rules drafted, by Mr. G. K. Gokhale, who, in drawing up its constitution, is said to have been undoubtedly influenced by the example of the Jesuits,<sup>2</sup> for its members, like those of the order of Jesus, are trained for, and dedicated to, their mission. Its avowed objects are to train national missionaries for the service of India and to promote the true interests of the Indian people. The first vows taken by a member are that he will always have India in his thoughts and serve her

<sup>1</sup> K. Subba Rao, *Revised Memories* (Madras, 1933), p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> E. L. and H. G. D. Turnbull, *Gopal Krishna Gokhale* (Trichur, 1934), p. 83.



without seeking any personal advantage and that he will regard all Indians as brothers and work for the advancement of all without distinction of caste or creed. The goal is defined as self-government within the Empire and a higher life for their countrymen, in whom a higher type of character is to be built up, the Indian mind being liberated from the thralldom of old-world ideas and assimilating all that is highest and best in the life and thought and character of the West. The Servants of India Society has already created a tradition of national service, and similar ideals inspire thousands of others who have no connexion with it but are equally anxious to spend themselves in service to their country, whether by work during epidemics of disease or the sudden calamities of floods, or by patient efforts for rural reconstruction.

The feeling of national self-respect to which reference has already been made in connexion with the treatment of Indians overseas is an important element in Indian nationalism. India, or at least educated opinion in India, has become world-conscious and sets great store by the opinion of the outside world and especially of the progressive nations of the West. Indians, like the Irish, are peculiarly sensitive to anything that honours them and their country and raises them and it in their own estimation and in that of other countries. National dignity and prestige are very dear to them, and they have an ardent desire to be recognized as one of the advanced peoples of the world, the heir of all the ages marching in the foremost files of time. It is this emotion which inspires the lines addressed to India, the motherland, by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu:

Lol we would thrill the high stars with thy story  
And set thee again in the forefront of glory.

Its effect is to produce a healthy spirit of emulation and so stimulate advance, which takes a western direction as the standards which India wishes to live up to are those set by the western world. The public opinion of the West is the bar by which she is ready to be tried. Its influence is discernible in many directions. It is apparent in the advocacy of social reforms, such as the removal of untouchability, in connexion with which it is frequently said: 'How can our country take her rightful place among the nations of the world if we allow our countrymen to remain sunk in ignorance and degradation?' It has been a factor in public policy and life, and its operation is seen in such matters as the adoption of labour legislation, the enfranchisement of women, and measures for the improvement of their position, particularly as regards child marriage, an added stimulus being given by a publication by an American lady, which strengthened the determination that India

should not be 'a proverb and a byword' among western nations. It was partly responsible for the demand for a democratic system of the modern western type. There were of course other determinants. There was the political education of a century during which a representative system of government had been held up as a model. There was too the practical consideration that Great Britain would be unwilling to agree to the institution of any other system. The adoption of democracy was therefore the price to be paid for autonomy. But there was also the feeling that a representative system would be an outward symbol of India's progress and that she would not be regarded as an equal of the western democratic nations if she had any other.

Democracy postulates a conception of equality which is exotic to India, and at one time many shared the view expressed by the President of the Indian National Congress in 1904, Sir Henry Cotton, in his presidential address, in which he said that it was a fact which should never be lost sight of that India, in spite of all its changes, was, and always had been, an aristocratic country, and any attempt to democratize Indian institutions was calculated to result in failure.<sup>1</sup> Some favoured the old Indian type of personal government, which is still maintained in the Indian States, and which was felt to be congenial to the Indian temperament. But its re-introduction in British India was scouted because it was not the British system, and India, by accepting it, would be looked down upon as reactionary and retrograde.

'Whatever', said Mr. G. K. Gokhale, 'may be our natural inclinations and tendencies, it is incompatible with our self-respect to be content with personal government under present conditions. We could put up with it under the Moguls and in Native States because it is *their* form of government. They do not rule us in one way and themselves in another. But it is not your method and you cannot apply it to us without despising us.'

'We feel that you have contempt for us because we submit to personal and despotic government, and so we feel that it is not compatible with self-respect to acquiesce in it. You would disdain to be governed in that way yourselves, and so you despise those who submit to it.'<sup>2</sup>

The driving force of political nationalism has been the desire of Indians to obtain control over their own destinies and so find opportunities for self-expression and self-realization. Some hold that this end can be attained within the British Commonwealth of Nations, and there is a solid, though not always very vocal, body of opinion in favour of keeping India within the British Empire but

<sup>1</sup> His concrete proposal was that the constitution of the legislatures should be so framed as to admit noblemen whose position and status in the country entitled them to seats.

<sup>2</sup> R. G. Milburn, *England and India* (1918), p. 18.



with full Dominion status, the attainment of which has also been accepted by the British government as the natural issue of India's progress. Others insist that India should not be a dependency of Great Britain. The affirmation of belief made by members of the National Congress says *inter alia*: 'The British government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom, but has based itself on exploitation of the masses and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally, and spiritually. We believe therefore that India must sever the British connexion and attain *purna swaraj* or complete independence.' A resolution passed by the Congress in 1939 affirms that it aims at the independence of India and the establishment of a democratic State with a constitution framed by a constituent assembly elected by the free will of the people without foreign interference. This statement of aims was reiterated in 1940.

The arguments in support of this resolution are obviously drawn from the ideology of modern western democracy. It is said that the time has come for the full application of the doctrine of self-determination, that not only the inherent right and the dignity of the people but also economic and other problems demand full freedom. India, it continues, can get rid of her poverty and keep pace with modern progress only if the people have the full opportunities of self-government and growth which independence alone can give. An independent India will line itself with the progressive peoples of the world and thus aid the cause of democracy and freedom.

Further, the Congress stands for the independence and democratization of the whole country and not of British India alone. India, it urges, is one and indivisible and should not be split up into two sections, one democratic and the other autocratic, one independent of the British, and the other dependent on them. It has therefore resolved not to join in a federation with the States until responsible government is introduced in them. Extremists announce that they would like the Princes to be members of a national assembly merely as representatives of their subjects and that they expect them to look to the people as the successors of the Crown when the latter parts with its power.

With their visions of Indian unity and freedom the more ardent nationalists press for an immediate advance. They are filled with a tense anti-British feeling and inveigh against British imperialism as something which should be resisted and rooted out, though, if their statements are analysed, it seems that their meaning is simply that the British connexion entails a system which falls short of full political freedom. The more extreme go so far as to say that the British should be excluded from helping to build up a new

India, however willing they may be to do so, and scout the idea of co-operation with them.

To judge from its pronouncements it would appear that the Congress party, in spite of its hostility to British rule, has elected for a form of government shaped and dominated by British ideas and habits. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri*. The shibboleths of democracy are glibly repeated. Emphasis is laid on democratic principles and tenets. Communal representation is denounced as contrary to them. The new constitution is said not to pass the acid test of democracy because of its safeguards and restrictions, the absence of free parliamentary responsibility at the centre, and the provision for a federation in which autocratic units will be included.

On the outbreak of war in 1939, the Congress working committee reiterated its faith in democracy, its abhorrence of the ideology and practice of Fascism and Nazism, and its demand for a free and democratic India, which would work for the establishment of a real world order based on freedom and democracy. It again asserted that the Indian people must have the right of self-determination to frame their own constitution through a constituent assembly without external interference. The All-India Congress Committee endorsed its statement by declaring that the objective of the Congress was to achieve the independence of the Indian people and to establish a free democratic State in India.<sup>1</sup> All the Congress ministries resigned because the British government refused to make a declaration to the effect that India was to be an independent nation and that it would agree to the future form of government being determined, without its intervention, by an Indian constituent assembly. Subsequently in 1940 the Congress adopted a resolution that nothing short of complete independence could be accepted by the people of India; that Indian freedom could not exist within the orbit of imperialism; and that Dominion status was wholly inapplicable to India and not in keeping with the dignity of a great nation. India's constitution, it affirmed, must be based on independence, democracy, and national unity; and sovereignty must rest with the people whether in the States or in the provinces. In August 1940 the Governor-General, with the authority of the British government, issued a statement declaring that the attainment by India of free and equal partnership in the British commonwealth of nations remained the proclaimed and accepted goal of the Imperial Crown and of the British parliament. At the same time he observed that in the discussions which had taken place there had been very strong insistence that the framing of a constitutional scheme should be

<sup>1</sup> *India and the War*, Cmd. 6121 (1939), pp. 12, 13, 16.



primarily the responsibility of Indians themselves and should originate from Indian conceptions of the social, economic, and political structure of Indian life—not, it may be noted, conceptions of western origin.<sup>1</sup>

The actual form of government which most of the Congress party contemplate is apparently a highly centralized parliamentary system like that of Great Britain. The party however includes various shades of political thought. It is a coalition of persons holding diverse political views but united in opposition to foreign domination. Different political philosophies derived from the West find common ground in the cause of nationalism. Some pin their faith on socialism, some on communism. There is a Congress socialist party with a considerable following, and there is a leaven of communism. In 1939 some members of the executive of the socialist party resigned on the ground that it had been seriously affected by communist infiltration and that it was detrimental both to the socialist movement and to the nationalist movement that their policies and activities should be controlled by an international organization dependent on the government of the Soviet Union.

Despite its name, the National Congress is not a national organization. Its total number was estimated in June 1940 at three millions out of 285 millions in British India. It is a party opposed by other parties, which apprehend that, if it had its way, the State would be organized on the basis of a single party without regard to the rights of minorities, so that there would be no democratic freedom. The All-India Muslim League holds that democracy, as interpreted by the Congress, is a Hindu *raj* writ large. It seeks independence of the British, but it also seeks independence of the Hindus. It fears the establishment of the rule of a majority community under the guise of democracy and a parliamentary system of government. 'Such a constitution', it says, 'is totally unsuited to the genius of the peoples of the country, which is composed of various nationalities and does not constitute a national state.' Representatives of the Liberal party, the Hindu Mahasabha, and the Depressed Classes and Independent Labour party, again, represent that the aim of the Congress is to make itself 'the only party in the land as is the case in Fascist and Nazi régimes—a result which would be a death-blow to democracy'.<sup>2</sup>

There are still some who cannot stomach the strong meat of democracy and who believe that a democratic system is not suited to the Indian temperament and Indian traditions. Many too, while in favour of representative institutions, are anxious to find

<sup>1</sup> *India and the War*, Cmd. 6219 (1940), pp. 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup> See *India and the War*, Cmd. 6121 (1939), pp. 17-21.

a system more appropriate to Indian conditions than the western device of territorial constituencies. Some would base representation on village councils. In Hyderabad an experiment is being made with a form of functional representation. In the constitutional reforms promulgated in 1939, territorial representation was rejected by H.E.H. the Nizam on the ground that it does not give economic interests as true representation as a system directly based on such interests. There are accordingly to be electorates with vocational and not regional qualifications, and the franchise is to be so regulated as to confine voting and representation to those actually engaged in 'interests', i.e. industries, trades, &c.

Until recent years social reform has scarcely been part of the nationalist programme, partly because of the absorbing interest taken in the question of self-government and partly because of difficulties due to religion, with which the social system is closely connected. Only Hindus could deal with Hindu social questions and Muslims with their own social system. Neither community was interested in, nor competent to deal with, the problems of the other, not to mention the fact that, as the President of the National Congress pointed out in 1892, it was impossible to find any common ground even as regards members of the same community. It was on this account that the consideration of questions of social reform was relegated in 1887 to a separate body, the Indian National Social Conference. In recent years, however, feeling has changed, and, under the influence of Mr. Gandhi, the Congress party had included the abolition of untouchability in its programme of reform.

Economic reform has also taken a secondary place to the movement for political reform. Men's minds have been so preoccupied with the question of self-government that there has been little room for the study of economic questions, besides which there has been a feeling that India will not be in a position to control her economic life till she is mistress in her own house and arbiter of her destinies.<sup>1</sup> Economic nationalism has been a late development and until recent years has been largely subsidiary, or merely incidental, to political nationalism. It may be said to have made its first appearance in 1905, when there was a boycott of British goods in Bengal, in connexion with the agitation against the partition of that province, and the *Swadeshi*<sup>2</sup> movement was started in order

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 'We suffer from the disease of nationalism, and that absorbs our attention, and it will continue to do so until we get political freedom.' Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (1936), p. 383.

<sup>2</sup> *Swadesh* means simply 'one's own country' (cf. *Sinn Fein*) and *Swadeshi* therefore is a variant form of the term national. *Swadeshi* goods, as defined for the purpose of the All-Indian Industrial Exhibition of 1938, are goods manufactured in India by Indian labour from Indian raw and basic materials under the guidance of concerns whose capital and management are predominantly



to stimulate the production of home-made goods by reviving old, and starting new, industries. The slogan of both was 'Buy Indian'. The boycott soon died, a victim to its own violence and impracticability. The *Swadeshi* movement lived and grew in strength, based as it was on the reasonable principle that the country should meet its requirements from its own resources and become economically self-sufficient. Economic nationalism is now firmly established, its motive spirit being the often-expressed idea that India had been reduced to the position of a hewer of wood and drawer of water for the manufacturing nations of the West and should be raised to economic independence. To it is due the adoption of a policy of discriminating protection and tariffs which has led to an increase of the manufacturing power of India and a quickening of the pace of industrialization, particularly by the establishment of a large number of domestic industries of a miscellaneous character. Its influence is apparent in the demand for Indian industries financed by Indian capital and under Indian direction, of which a practical outcome is the provision made in the Government of India Act of 1935 that the legislature may refuse to give grants or subsidies to trading and industrial companies not already established in India unless half the personnel of directors is Indian and unless they provide facilities for the training of Indians. The field for manufacturing enterprise directed and financed from abroad has consequently been narrowed, though there are still opportunities for western technical skill working under Indian direction and control. A determined effort is being made by political leaders and industrialists to make India economically independent and to develop its manufactures, and some of the British export trade has already been seriously affected. Further industrialization is contemplated, and in order to promote it systematically, an All-India Economic Planning Committee was constituted at a conference of Ministers from provinces with Congress Ministries, held in August 1938, and this is intended to pave the way for an Economic Planning Commission, which is to act as a kind of board of control for industries in British India.

#### THE CLASH OF CULTURES

In less than two centuries India, and particularly British India, has been subject to a succession of new forces, and the changes due to their operation have made a deep mark on its life. An indigenous civilization which, though advanced in many ways, was essentially static, was brought into contact with a progressive

Indian, with the proviso that foreign raw or basic materials may be used in cases where India cannot supply them.

civilization of foreign origin. A western system of government and law was established; English education, with its different standards and values, was introduced; new political conceptions were implanted and took root; economic conditions were in a large measure transformed by modern means of transport. The diffusion of new knowledge, the extension of the range of communication, and the rapidity with which ideas can be transmitted have all affected the life of India profoundly, and there have been far-reaching changes in the social order, even more in political life, and to a minor extent in the religious sphere.

The passing of the old order is lamented by the *laudatores temporis acti*, who even now are not reconciled to the new order of things but complain that the whole form and character of society have been changed, ancient landmarks, religious, social, and economic, have been removed, old sanctities have been weakened or destroyed, and general unrest has been created—all owing to the intrusion of a civilization for which they never asked. In the early years of the nineteenth century, however, western culture met with a sympathetic response, which may be attributed primarily to a natural susceptibility to new intellectual stimuli. The cultured classes are, like the English, of a quick, ingenious, and piercing spirit, and aptitude for new knowledge had led some centuries earlier to the adoption of Persian culture. Zeal for learning was now quickened in reaction from the stagnation of intellectual and spiritual life. Conditions were not unlike those of western Europe before the Renaissance. Literature was at a low ebb. Religion had become formal and mechanical, popular Hinduism consisting mainly of a ritual of prescribed observances, and having a layer of idolatry and polytheism, in which there was little to elevate conduct or ennoble belief. An Indian estimate of the general debasement of culture is that in social usage, in politics, in the realm of religion and art, India had entered the zone of uncreative habit and decadent tradition.<sup>1</sup>

Just as western Europe woke from the lethargy of the Middle Ages and turned to the literature of Greece and Rome for models of thought and style, so India was roused from its intellectual coma by contact with the West, and turned to western literature, science, and philosophy for cultural inspiration. Sanskrit works were no longer the sole fountains of truth and models of composition. Thought began to follow western channels and even to borrow forms of expression. There was a certain amount of deliberate imitation, particularly in Bengal, where many, despising composition in their own language, made English the vehicle of

<sup>1</sup> See S. C. Sarkar and S. K. Datta, *Text-book of Indian History* (Patna, 1933), vol. ii, p. 179.



their ideas. Madhu Sudhan Dutt, for example, wrote English verse till he was over thirty years of age, and it was only then that his genius as an epic poet found an outlet in his mother tongue. The outlook of reflective and intellectual minds was changed, and there were movements of religious and social reform due to the leaven of new principles. The doctrines of Paine and Hume came into favour, and there was a partial revolt against institutional religion. English-educated students ridiculed forms and ceremonies as the product of superstition and ignorance. Students of the Hindu College in Calcutta started a society called the *Athenaeum* and some, instead of repeating prayers to the deities, recited passages from the *Iliad*.

The great body both of Hindus and of Muslims however showed no desire to change old lamps for new. They were impressed by western science and efficiency, and they appreciated the security afforded by the new system of government and the liberty created by law, but they abhorred the subversive doctrines imported from abroad. The traditional régime continued to be observed in religious and social life. The life and manners of those who became europeanized were derided by literary satirists, who heaped ridicule on them as a denationalized class. Muslims pursued their studies in Arabic and Persian. Indo-Persian culture was not extinguished, but maintained its vitality at Delhi and Lucknow, where it was regarded as part of a liberal education and had some vogue, both among Hindus and Muslims, till comparatively recent times. Brahmans devoted themselves, as before, to Sanskrit learning and maintained Hindu rites and ceremonies, unaffected by western influences. Their authority was threatened but they refused to compromise, or to come to terms with progress, liberalism, and the levelling forces of western civilization, and endeavoured to defend the innermost shrine of their culture—religion—from its onslaught.

These contrary currents of thought have continued to run parallel. There has been a simultaneous attraction for and reaction against western civilization, the tendency in one direction or the other being accentuated at different times. It has been a case not so much of a pendulum swinging backwards and forwards as of two streams flowing in different directions and swelling in volume from time to time. The influence of the West has spread and there has been acceptance of much that is incidental to it, but at the same time there has been a constant endeavour to shake off its incubus and to retain the old régime. And Hinduism, with that ready adaptation to circumstances, that extraordinary capacity for turning alien forces to its own purposes, which it has always shown, has used ideas imported from the West in self-defence. As has

been well said, the threat to which it is exposed from the sceptical and analytical forces which threatened it has driven it to consolidate and employ for its own uses all those diverse emotions and activities which nationalism arouses in modern lands.<sup>1</sup>

There was at first a frank acknowledgement of the merits, or even the superiority, of western civilization by many of those who came into contact with it. Thus, we find Raja Ram Mohan Ray confessing that the blind patriotism of youth had made him detest the English and all that came with them. Europe was odious to him, but, as he grew older, he had come to the conclusion that a conquest is very rarely an evil when the conquerors are more civilized than the people conquered, because they bring to the latter the advantages of civilization.<sup>2</sup> But a reaction set in, of which Sir Surendranath Banerjea wrote as follows (in 1925, at the age of 75):

'Our fathers, the firstfruits of English education, were violently pro-British. They could see no flaw in the civilization or the culture of the West. They were charmed by its novelty and its strangeness. The enfranchisement of the individual, the substitution of the right of private judgement in place of traditional authority, the exaltation of duty over custom, all came with the force and suddenness of a revelation to an Oriental people who knew no more binding obligation than the mandate of immemorial usage and of venerable tradition. . . . Everything English was good—even the drinking of brandy was a virtue; everything not English was to be viewed with suspicion. . . . In due time came the reaction, and with a sudden rush. And from the adoration of all things western, we are now in the whirlpool of a movement that would recall us back to our ancient civilization and our time-honoured ways and customs untempered by the impact of the ages that have rolled by and the forces of modern life.'<sup>3</sup>

For this reaction the 'superiority complex' of the English was partly responsible. Their general attitude was one of complete assurance as to the superiority of their own civilization and the universal validity of the concepts on which it rests. As has been remarked by Élie Halévy, to an Englishman English society is the whole of society, the ideal society, and it is characteristic of this attitude that Buckle treated all forms of human civilization as so many deviations from the true norm of civilization, the civilization of Great Britain.<sup>4</sup>

The claim of superiority wounded feelings of self-esteem and

<sup>1</sup> Lord Meston, *Nationhood for India* (1931), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> J. K. Mazumdar, *Indian Speeches and Documents on British Rule, 1825-1918* (1937), p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> *A Nation in Making* (1925) p. 308. Elsewhere Sir Surendranath Banerjea, describing the days of his youth, said that drink 'was considered to be an inseparable part of English culture. A man who did not drink was hardly entitled to be called educated.' *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *A History of the English People* (1937), p. xiii.



roused feelings of exasperation and antagonism. 'Why,' it was asked, 'should we be treated as if we were inferior in mental capacity and moral tone to Europeans?' In these circumstances it was almost inevitable that an opposing sense of national and cultural consciousness should be created and that the claim of superiority should be met with a denial or a counterclaim on behalf of Indian culture. There was a kind of revolt-mentality marked by antipathy to European civilization as a whole. Europe was seen as a unit. The British were identified with the civilization of which they were the representatives, and it was taken to be not simply their own but the product of Europe as a whole.

It was felt that this alien civilization, with its levelling influences and rationalistic methods of thought and interpretation, was destructive of Hinduism or rather of Hinduism as a religion pivoted on the Brahmins, in other words, Brahmanism. Brahmins found that their power was being undermined and that they were losing their position of theocratic dominance. Their authority was challenged, their beliefs questioned, and they feared that the power of directing the public mind, which they had exercised for centuries, was slipping from their hands.

"They see plainly", wrote Raja Siva Prasad in 1859, 'that Hindooism is declining every day, and a day will soon come when the Brahmins will be reduced to the same level as the Sudras. They trace and find no other cause of it but the intercourse of the natives with the Europeans *alias* the advancement of civilization . . . the Brahmins trace their downfall which they term the downfall of Hindooism to the intercourse of the natives with Europeans, and so they curse the Europeans. It is not the reading of this or that book but the civilization itself which is opposed to Hindooism.'

Closer contacts with the West, so far from inducing a *rapprochement*, seemed often to produce a stronger sense of alienation. Many Indians reciprocated the sentiment *Plus je vis d'étrangers, plus j'aimai ma patrie*. A form of cultural nationalism developed which was sufficiently pronounced to attract attention in 1858, when it was noticed that it was common for those who had been educated in English colleges and schools to show revulsion against European influences and a revived attachment to Indian institutions.

"The more educated, the more bigoted", it was said, 'is an expression which of late has passed into a proverb with reference to both the Brahmins and Mussulmen, especially the former. . . . Even the education of the English colleges makes them more bigoted, paradoxical as such an assertion may appear. Under the English collegiate and high school system the pupils frequently become infidel, but almost invari-

<sup>1</sup> *Memorials of the Life and Letters of Major-General Sir Herbert B. Edwards* (1886), vol. II, p. 280.

ably affect or feel an attachment to the superstitions which they theoretically despise, resent any indignity to them, and any apparent attempt to subvert them. It is common for these native pupils to acquire in their classic reading a violent nationality (*sic*) and a longing for the liberation of India from a foreign yoke. This feeling causes them to identify themselves with native customs and to cherish hostility to every English innovation except it contribute to their own advancement or enjoyment.<sup>1</sup>

With the establishment of universities there was a further diffusion of advanced English education and consequently of European thought. Within a decade of their foundation the fear was expressed that educated India might become an infidel India. In Bengal missionaries deplored the extent to which the educated classes were infected by 'European infidelity' and allowed their beliefs to be undermined by German and English rationalism. In Bombay the paper *Indu Prakash* declared in 1866 that the system of education practically taught atheism. 'Our young men', it said, 'are, many of them, forced by it into the unhappy position of the sceptics and infidels of Europe.' Many too were filled with an intense, almost extreme, admiration of western, and particularly English, life and manners. Thus, we find Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan writing in 1869: 'Without flattering the English I can say that the natives of India, high and low, merchants and shopkeepers, educated and illiterate, when contrasted with the English in education, manners, and uprightness, are as like them as a dirty animal is to an able and handsome man. . . . All good things, spiritual and worldly, which should be found in man have been bestowed by the Almighty on Europe, and especially on England.'<sup>2</sup>

Sir George Trevelyan, writing in 1864, said that the upper classes sought after wisdom as eagerly and insatiably as the Greeks of Athens and Alexandria. Young Brahmins wrote like Addison and talked like Samuel Johnson. Men who maintained the outward observances of Hinduism drew their intellectual beliefs from Locke, Adam Smith, and Buckle. The most recent and advanced theories of political and social science were given currency in the Indian Press, which, it was said, published articles that might

<sup>1</sup> P. Nolan, *History of the British Empire in India and the East*, vol. i, p. 326. The charge of bigotry appears to have been based on the objections made to the use of public funds for Christian institutions. Formerly, it had been regarded as natural and right for a Christian government to provide for the service and support of its religion just as much as for the Muslim rulers to build mosques and endow Islamic institutions. Now, however, the English-educated class objected to the expenditure of public money on objects connected with Christianity and were said to regard Christian churches and Christian schools as standing memorials of subjugation and grants of money or land for them as injuries to their country.

<sup>2</sup> Raja Rao and Iqbal Singh, *Changing India* (1939) p. 120.



have been written by John Stuart Mill, Goldwin Smith, and Maurice.<sup>1</sup> Young intellectual India became a kind of sounding-board for contemporary European thought. At one time there was an attraction for positivism, the works of Comte being eagerly studied. Later, Herbert Spencer became popular and his secularism was in vogue.

Attention has mostly been concentrated on the classical and modern literature of England, but the Indian literati have ranged far afield and become familiar with the productions of other western countries. Thus we find Rabindranath Tagore, when a young man, publishing translations from Victor Hugo and articles on Goethe, Dante, Petrarch, and Tasso. Scandinavian drama was at one time popular, and since the war of 1914-18 the younger generation have shown a penchant for Karl Marx and Russian revolutionary literature. Authors like Turgenieff, Dostoevski, and Gorki are also read, Indian readers, particularly perhaps the Bengalis,<sup>2</sup> finding in them a certain affinity of spirit.

Many of the class that borrowed ideas from the West idealized the past of India, glossed over or explained away its less favourable or more objectionable features, and painted an imaginary picture of its perfections. So common had this become by 1866 that in an address to the University of Calcutta Sir Henry Maine felt it his duty as its Vice-Chancellor to sound a note of warning against the growing tendency of the educated to employ ingenious analogies and subtle explanations to justify usages which they did not venture to defend directly or of which in their hearts they disapproved. They endeavoured to persuade themselves and others that outworn beliefs and discarded customs were in harmony with the modern knowledge which they had acquired and the modern civilization to which they aspired. Knowledge was, in fact, being put to irrationally reactionary purposes. Theories were founded on fiction, distorted views were put forward, and delusions were entertained which had no basis in fact. For this, he believed, European influences were in a great measure responsible. The pride of Indians in their past had been awakened by the admiration shown by Europeans for its intellectual achievements, but the root cause was that they had caught from Europeans the trick of making an unreal and untrue picture of the past coloured by the views of their own times.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *The Competition-Wallah* (1907), pp. 304, 305, 314, 332.

<sup>2</sup> According to a Czech writer, Professor Lesny, the schizophrenic characters of Dostoevski and Gorki make a considerable impression on the Bengali, who is fond of exalting his petty troubles and ineffectiveness as well as his more important worries, is given to self-pity, and demands pity of others. V. Lesny, *Rabindranath Tagore* (1939), p. 244.

<sup>3</sup> *Village Communities in the East and West* (1876), pp. 288-93.

In religion there was a reawakening to the fundamental values of Hinduism which led to a renaissance, inspired by the belief that it should be remoulded to the form which it was believed to have had in early times, when it was simple and pure and strong. A movement of reform was initiated by Dayanand Saraswati, who founded the Arya Samaj in 1875. His slogan was 'Back to the Vedas', in which he found both the well of Hinduism pure and undefiled and a source of secular knowledge, even ascribing to them acquaintance with modern discoveries and inventions such as electricity and the steam-engine. It had been maintained by Brahmans that there was no knowledge worth having outside their sacred books, and he took a similar view, holding that what they contained was infallible truth and that what they did not contain was fallible or negligible. The Hindu revival received a further stimulus from the Theosophical Society, founded in the same year, which gave unstinting praise, approaching adulation, to Hindu institutions, justified where it could not praise, and sedulously affirmed that India was on a higher plane of thought than the West.

The attitude towards western civilization became increasingly critical and hostile, that towards Indian culture increasingly uncritical, lyrical rather than logical—so much so that it was called indolatriy. Current opinion was reflected in a catch-phrase: 'The East is spiritual, the West material.' Western materialism was held up to scorn. The word was not used in a philosophical sense, as in the theory that nothing exists except matter, but either meant secularism<sup>1</sup> or was merely given the popular connotation of devotion to material interests and a low banausic standard of values. There was much parrot-like repetition of the phrase, and the idea which it represented was often based on ignorance of European mentality. It ignored the gross materialism of the popular form of Hinduism and overlooked the fact that the so-called materialism of the West is really infused by the Christian ethos. But it had its roots in a fundamental antipathy to a different conception of life and was the sincere expression of a conviction that the East, and especially India, is profoundly religious and the West profoundly irreligious. This belief was mostly voiced by Hindus, but the Muslims were not unaffected by it, as may be judged from the bitter satire of an Urdu poet who wrote under the pseudonym of Akbar: 'The East is spiritual, the West material. Mansur<sup>2</sup> said "I am God", Darwin "I am the son of an ape."'

<sup>1</sup> Briefly, the doctrine that the guiding principle of conduct should be the well-being of man in the present life without regard to considerations based on belief in God or a future state.

<sup>2</sup> A Sufi pantheist of the tenth century A.D. The allusion is to the belief in the immanence of God.



The belief in India's spiritual superiority was greatly strengthened by Swami Vivekananda, the chief exponent of the doctrines called the New Vedanta, who insisted that the West must be conquered by Indian spirituality. This was the keynote of the lectures which he delivered in England and America from 1893 to 1896, beginning with an address to the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago. There he made a great impression, the *New York Herald* saying: 'After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation.' Even though India depreciates the West, it is peculiarly sensitive to its opinion, and when Swami Vivekananda returned to his own country, he was welcomed back as a kind of national hero, who had vindicated India before the western nations. According to one Indian writer, his brilliant presentation of Indian spirituality at Chicago had an effect on the imagination of the whole of India comparable in a measure to the effect of Japan's victory over Russia.<sup>1</sup> He was acclaimed as a champion of India, who had dared to assert her spiritual greatness in the face of the western world. His, it was said, was the religion of nationalism, the cult of India.

Although the early enthusiasm for western culture was obscured by this cultural nationalism, it did not die out. Men were not wanting to stem the current of reaction and to warn their countrymen of the folly of exaggerating the achievements of India and of disparaging the contributions made by the West. Mr. Monmohan Ghose, one of the leading publicists of his day, remarked that it was quite sickening to hear at every public meeting that the ancient civilization of India was superior to any which Europe had ever had, and he pointed out that much harm was being caused by undue and exaggerated veneration of the past. A Bombay newspaper wrote that patriotism was taken to mean blind praise of all that was Indian, and strong denunciation of all that was foreign. 'It matters not whether a custom is good or bad; it is ours and we must praise it.'<sup>2</sup> Nor were scholars and scientists wanting who preserved an even balance of judgement and, while giving praise where praise was due, drew attention to the dark side of the picture, frankly stating, for example, that the Hindu mind was imbued with superstitions which seemed puerile and meaningless, and that not a few of the works produced even during the brightest periods of Hindu civilization were strange compounds of the sublime and the ridiculous.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> K. T. Paul, *The British Connection with India* (1927), p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> Loc. cit., J. S. Dennis, *Christian Missions and Social Progress* (1899), vol. i, p. 376.

<sup>3</sup> See P. N. Basu, *A History of Hindu Civilization during British Rule* (Calcutta, 1894), vol. i, p. x. Speaking of one work on astronomy, this writer said that anyone reading it would be inclined to echo Alberuni's remark that the

Much of the pride in Indian culture was sterile and uncreative, its admirers being content to live on their heritage and to forget Goethe's admonition: 'What thou hast inherited from thy fathers, earn it anew if thou wouldst possess it.' But there was also constructive work. Cultural nationalism was not merely a visionary contemplation of the past but had some practical results of real value. Literature became more original and less indebted to English models. A body of scholars devoted themselves to research in Indian history. Sanskrit and the current Indian languages were studied with fresh ardour at the universities.

One outcome of the movement was the foundation in 1916 of the Benares Hindu University, an institution for the higher education of the community whose name it bears, which has as one of its main objects the study and conservation of Indian culture. Another was the revival of Indian art, which had become debased and meretricious owing to the popularity of imitations of cheap and shoddy specimens of European art. It began to revert to Indian forms of expression, particularly in the Bengal school of painting, which took the old Indian style as its model. This school was not altogether Indian in origin, for it had a European father, Mr. E. B. Havell, Principal of the Government School of Art in Calcutta from 1900 to 1907, who inculcated the idea that western influences had had a pernicious effect on Indian art, which must follow Indian lines or perish. His ideas were taken up by Abanindranath Tagore and Gaganendra Nath Tagore, who founded the Indian School of Oriental Painting and School of Art in 1907. The doctrines of this school have not found general acceptance, and its work, which to many seems of a somewhat archaic and conventionalized pattern, is perhaps more popular in England and America than in India itself. In Bombay the problem of artistic development is being dealt with on different lines, and a certain synthesis is aimed at. The necessity of giving an outlet to the genius of Indian artists is recognized, but it is held that western methods should not be altogether discarded but improvement effected by taking good examples of European art as standards and allowing artists to discover new modes of expression.<sup>1</sup> In a recent work by an Indian writer<sup>2</sup> it is pointed out that western art has features which may be found in ancient Indian work and that when the Indian public derides modern European art, it betrays ignorance of the guiding principles of the ancient art of its own country. To these, it is urged, India should return enlivened by the broad

mathematics and astronomical literature of the Hindus could only be compared to a mixture of pearls and dung or of costly crystals and common pebbles.

<sup>1</sup> See 'Indian Art and the Bombay Movement' by W. E. Gladstone Solomon, *The English Review*, November 1934.

<sup>2</sup> K. Khandalavala, *Indian Sculpture and Painting* (1939).



view and developed technique of the West. 'The future of Indian art does not lie in mere eccentricity, nor does it lie in the production of work which has a superficial resemblance to the ancient art of bygone centuries.'

The cultural nationalism to which we have referred was mainly Hindu. It made little appeal to the Muslims, both because it was Hindu in inspiration and because a narrow nationalism is opposed to the spirit of Islam. Islam is not only a religion; it constitutes a cosmic community, which has its own distinctive culture. Its outlook is international and it is fundamentally antagonistic to racial and cultural nationalism. Cultural affinity is a bond of union among Muslims in all parts of the world; an Indian Muslim takes a pride in his sons receiving the same education as those of his co-religionists at al-Azhar in Cairo. The only part of India's past in which he takes a real pride is the period of Muslim rule. English education was rejected, partly because of the attachment to Islamic culture but even more because the educational system contravened the cherished principle that religious teaching should go hand in hand with secular instruction. Accordingly, the study of Arabic, the language of the Holy Book, and of Persian, the language of cultured gentlemen, continued in spite of the fact that English education had become the passport to government service.

A reaction against a purely oriental system of education came with the realization that the Muslims were losing the superiority over the Hindus which they regarded as their natural heritage and were being outstripped in the race for place and power, a contributory factor being the suspicion and mistrust with which they were regarded by the British after the Mutiny. It was recognized that their rehabilitation depended on the acquisition of western learning, which would enable them to compete on equal terms with the Hindus. The teaching of Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan and others that knowledge was power and English was the key of modern knowledge was acted on; and English education was adopted for utilitarian purposes, though the secular system of education which was in vogue in the government colleges and schools was not adopted because it ran counter to Islamic conceptions of the nature of education, of which religion is an essential ingredient. The outcome of the movement was the establishment of the Anglo-Muhammadian College at Aligarh, which was the first independent educational effort of any magnitude made by the Muslims since the establishment of British rule more than a century before. This institution, as its name implies, aimed at giving an English education without, however, sacrificing the social and religious ideas of Islam; and the hope was expressed that it would be an intellectual

capital for Indian Muslims commanding the same respect in the world of letters as Berlin or Oxford, Leipzig or Paris—an aspiration which shows how the Muslim leaders had begun to turn to the West for educational standards.

At about the same time a reforming movement set in which had its origin in modern liberalizing ideas of the West. More liberal and less literal standards were applied in the interpretation of the commands and concepts of the Koran, and social reform was advocated in such matters as divorce, polygamy, purdah, and the education of women. The westernizing movement was like a wedge driven into and dividing the Muslim community. Some welcomed western culture whole-heartedly. 'Leave us our God; in all else make us English', was a remark made to the Principal of the Aligarh College by a Muslim who represented the modernist school of thought. Others, while admitting the material advantages of western learning, abhorred its secularizing tendencies, which, in their view, led to a neglect of the primary obligations of true Muslims. The substitution of reason for authority in the interpretation of the sacred book was considered as little short of heresy by the orthodox, whose views may be illustrated by a remark which a maulvi made to Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan: 'We don't object to English education or to your wearing English clothes. What we do object to is that you learn natural theology; that you try to interpret the Koran in ways that we cannot follow; that you throw aside the authority of the commentators and take your stand upon the text as interpreted by your own intelligence.'

In spite of all the hostility shown to western civilization, India could not do without it. Perfervid eulogies of Indian spirituality and rhetorical denunciations of western materialism could no more stop the encroachments of the West than Canute could prevent the ingress of the tide. The country was affected by world changes in commerce and industrialism. The cultural and political influences of the West spread with the extended knowledge of English. Even the Arya Samaj, opposed as it was to western influences, found that it could not work only by eastern methods and had to modify its educational programme so as to admit western culture, which it combined with that of India. The English language became the common tongue of the universities, of the political platform, and of the most influential section of the Press. Its words were in daily use and its phrases part of the household speech in many families. When in 1915 a resolution was moved in the Imperial Legislative Council recommending that the vernaculars should be made the medium of higher education in place of English, it was received with a chorus of disapproval and condemned as an anti-national proposal. Not a word was said



about western materialism and the evils caused by the intrusion of an alien civilization. On the contrary, it was pointed out that English education had brought India into contact with all that was ennobling in western civilization and had given her a new life. Macaulay was referred to as if he were a harbinger of light, rather than an emissary of darkness, the evil genius of Indian education, one member saying that he had earned the gratitude of India by founding that enlightened educational policy which had done so much to spread the culture, the enlightenment, and the science of the West.

During the present century thought has moved in so many directions, there have been changes so kaleidoscopic in variety and rapidity, that it is difficult to keep pace with them; but, in the main, there are two predominant schools of thought, one regressive and hostile to western civilization, the other progressive and sensitive to winds blowing from the West. The former is loath to admit that Indian culture falls short of the ideal and looks on modern western civilization as a baneful influence, which causes deterioration of spiritual values. The West is like pitch, the touch of which defiles. Through it, it is said, India is in danger of sacrificing her traditional idealism and sense of spiritual values, of losing her soul (to quote a common Indian phrase), and becoming an intellectual parasite of the West. She should strive to reproduce the legendary golden age, an age of rural simplicity. If this is done, men will not crowd into towns or swell the labour force in mills and factories, but each man will live happily on his own holding, and the simple wants of the people will be supplied by cottage industries.

The chief exponent of this scheme of life has been Mr. Gandhi, who has inveighed against western civilization as a civilization without religion and morals, a civilization only in name;<sup>1</sup> his counsel, like that of St. Paul, is: 'Be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing.' He is convinced that the civilization evolved by India is the perfect pattern and provides the conditions under which spiritual ideals can be attained, whereas western civilization prevents the realization of her true self. She has been corrupted by it and must be reformed by returning to the simple virtues of an earlier age. She must rise to her full stature as a nation but retain the virtues of the old-world society. He conceives of a civilization

<sup>1</sup> 'The tendency of Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being, that of the western civilization is to propagate immorality. The latter is godless, the former is based on a belief in God. So understanding and so believing, it behoves every lover of India to cling to her old civilization even as a child clings to its mother's breast.' 'In order to restore India to its pristine condition, we have to return to it. In our own civilization there will naturally be progress, retrogression, reforms and reactions; but one effort is required, and that is to drive out western civilization. All else will follow.' *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* (Madras, 1921), pp. 57, 94.

based not on industrial competition but on a fundamental simplicity of life and labour. Industrialism is anathema. Machinery, 'the chief symbol of modern civilization, represents a great sin'. It is 'like a snake-hole which may contain from one to a hundred snakes'.<sup>1</sup> It must be gradually done away with, and the people must revert to the use of the spinning-wheel and hand-loom. Hand-weaving will be a remedy for under-employment and will utilize idle man-power, providing, as he said in his newspaper, the *Harijan*, of 10 December 1938, work for millions who would otherwise remain idle for nearly four months in the year. It will have valuable effects, both psychological and economic. Labour which would otherwise be wasted or unused will be fruitfully employed, and India made more self-sufficient and less dependent on imported mill-made goods. The home-spun, hand-made cloth, called *khadi*, must be a national dress worn by rich and poor alike and so serve as a symbol of unity. His injunctions have so far borne fruit in that *khadi* has become the common dress of the Congress party; on account of its association with the nationalist cause it has been dignified with the name of the livery of freedom.

This is only one part of a comprehensive programme aiming at national regeneration and the elimination of poverty. The regeneration of the nation is to be attempted through its villages and its schools. The village is to be restored to its place as a unit of national life, self-contained and self-sufficing, by means of rural reconstruction'; in pursuance of this aim the All-India Village Industries Association (known by its initials as the A.I.V.I.A.) was founded by Mr. Gandhi at the end of 1934. An educational scheme, adjusted to the practical needs of daily life, has been propounded, which is to lead up to universal primary education. Poverty is to be reduced by the prohibition of liquor—a measure of idealism which is gradually being adopted in some provinces in spite of the loss of revenue which it entails. The social system must be reformed by the abolition of untouchability, which is a blot on Hinduism.<sup>2</sup>

Further, Hindi or Hindustani<sup>3</sup> should, according to Mr. Gandhi,

<sup>1</sup> *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, pp. 95, 98. In this respect he voiced the view of many of his compatriots. For example, Mr. C. R. Das, a former Nationalist leader, declared that industrialism never was, and never would be, part of the Indian nature. By establishing it in their country Indians would lay down the road to their destruction, for mills and factories would crush out their life, and they would become as dead and soulless as the machines which they operated.

<sup>2</sup> The writer can make no pretension to anything approaching an exhaustive analysis of Mr. Gandhi's ideas and does not hope to do more than generalize a few of them.

<sup>3</sup> In *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* Mr. Gandhi advocated the use of Hindi (using both the Urdu and Devanagari script) but at present he refers to it as Hindustani.



be made a universal language for India and replace English as a lingua franca. As he explained in the *Harijan* of 28 October 1938, Hindustani is the recognized official language of the Congress, designed as an all-India language for inter-provincial contacts, which is not to supplant but to supplement provincial languages. As a first step the Congress proceedings must be conducted exclusively in Hindustani, and the Congress must prescribe dictionaries for use by delegates and supply new words which are not found in them. Attempts have accordingly been made to substitute Hindi for English as a language of debate, but Hindi has started late in the race and so far the results have not been altogether encouraging.<sup>1</sup> There is a party which hopes to make Hindi the national language of India, but it is opposed by Muslims, who fear it may displace Urdu and, in South India, are ready to boycott talking films using Hindi. It is also opposed by many Hindus in Madras, where the introduction of Hindi is resisted on cultural grounds, a pride being taken in the culture expressed in the Dravidian language of Tamil and objections made to the invasion of an Aryan tongue. Here the idea of a national Indian language runs counter to a feeling of regional nationalism; and since the Madras Government ordered in 1938 that Hindi should be a compulsory subject in the first three forms of secondary schools, there has been a strong anti-Hindi agitation. An Anti-Hindi Propaganda League has been formed; schools, and on one occasion the Premier's house, have been picketed; and there have been over a thousand convictions in the criminal courts on account of the annoyance and disturbance which have been caused.

Outside the totalitarian countries, Russia, Germany, and Italy, it would be hard to find a modern parallel to the influence exercised by one man over so many millions of people. Physically frail, Mr. Gandhi bestrides the Hindu world like a colossus. He has provided ideas which inspire and guide workers in the field of sociology, who order their activities in conformity with his teachings. Collectively the latter constitute a philosophy of life, which is called the Gandhian ideology, while the present age in India is often called the Gandhian era. The keynote of his philosophy is the supremacy of spiritual values, economic values being relegated to a secondary place—a Hindu conception of the purpose of life<sup>2</sup>—and it is because his life and doctrines are attuned to

<sup>1</sup> 'I have seen in recent years', writes Mr. Patrick Lacey, 'the difficulties experienced at the (Congress) party's annual sessions when efforts were made to conduct the entire proceedings in Hindi. Delegates from Bengal and Madras grumbled because they could not understand the speeches. An eminent Sindhi began to speak in English but was silenced by shouts for Hindi. He tried it for a single sentence, and with roars of laughter was begged to revert to English.' *Asiatic Review*, July 1938, p. 335.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 'In the Hindu scheme the cultural forms the highest and the economic

Hindu ideas that he has such a peculiar ascendancy over the minds of his co-religionists. So much is this the case that he has produced a kind of 'group-mind', which accepts his values and applies his teaching, in some cases with admirable results, as in the movements for social service, rural uplift, and the removal of untouchability.

Diametrically opposed to the reactionary school of thought is that of the realists and progressives with a more mundane outlook, who regard many of these ideas as the baseless fabric of a vision. They hold that India must not look back on the past but look forward to the future. The clock cannot be put back, and she cannot return to a life of Arcadian simplicity but must move with the times and conform to the conditions of the modern world. In the interests of her people, and in order that she may take her fitting place among the nations of the world, she must solve her problems with the aid of western science and knowledge. The cult of the spinning-wheel is rejected as an unpractical intensification of individualism in production, and it is pointed out that, as elsewhere in the world, effete methods of production by hand must give way to machinery and hand-looms be replaced by factories. The past, it is said, is dead and gone; a return to antiquity is not the road to recovery; the culture of ancient India, however glorious, will not help to solve its present-day problems. The encroachment of the machine is not feared as disturbing the ordered balance of a static life but is welcomed as a factor of progress. The future of India, it is urged, lies in industrialization, which according to some will be a panacea for its economic ills, and according to others is at any rate bound to bring about a better adjustment of economic life. Increased production is necessary and will become possible through improved forms of organization. Economic planning is finding more and more favour among those with whom lies the direction of public affairs, as a policy which will reduce poverty, waste, and unemployment.

Some would go farther and introduce a system of socialism or communism. There is a Left Wing which has its eyes fixed on the economic and industrial progress of Russia, and they envisage the unification of industry by the State and the collectivization of land as the ultimate goal of economic endeavour. A communist party has been active for some years, and has openly preached class warfare against landlords and threatened them with expropriation. Study circles are formed among college students, who are supplied with Marxian literature. A programme is outlined for the organiza-

the lowest, for the cultural and the spiritual are ends in themselves and are not pursued for the sake of anything else.' Sir S. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life* (1927), pp. 117-18.



tion of the masses in order to produce revolution, and the desirability of establishing a workers' and peasants' state on the Russian model is urged. Meetings are held at which the red flag and the Bolshevik symbol of the sickle and hammer are displayed and revolutionary slogans are repeated, such as *Inqibal zinda bad*, i.e. long live revolution. Calcutta has a 'Lenin Day' and a 'November revolution' day, and these are only two of a number of 'days' which indicate how modern and international the outlook is becoming, e.g. May Day, Independence Day (26 January), and, in 1938, Palestine day and Spain day.

It is also asserted by a leftist group which subscribes to Marxian doctrines of social development that political democracy is meaningless without social equality and that there should therefore be a classless society. Young India is exhorted to think and dream of a new order, in which the accidents of birth and wealth will not blind its vision to the fundamental solidarity and brotherhood of all mankind. Such ideas are not only inculcated in the intellectual youth but are made the basis of an appeal to the peasantry and to low-paid urban wage-earners. In this connexion it may be mentioned that the legislatures of more than one province have passed resolutions that the conferment of titles and honours should be discontinued, the reason, according to a resolution passed by the Legislative Assembly of Bihar in 1938, being that they encourage slave mentality. Some too adopt not only the economic and social tenets of the Soviet faith but also its materialist philosophy, though nothing can be more antagonistic to the Hindu view of life which has been a guiding force for many centuries. They are infected with the Bolshevik view that religion is a dope for the people, and wholeheartedly accept secularism.<sup>1</sup> India's backwardness is attributed to her religiosity. Her quietism is regarded as a bar to national progress, and her spirituality is referred to with derision and contempt. It has even been made a reproach against Mr. Gandhi that he should endeavour to throw open the temples to untouchables, because, it is said, the time has come when men should move away from them.

Even among those who are more conservative and less iconoclastic religion is not such a dominating influence as it once was. Nationalism seems to have displaced it as a ruling passion among

<sup>1</sup> The following story told by an Indian professor at an economic conference is said to have been received by his audience with very hearty approval. An Indian who had spent some time in Russia had a boy named Rama Chandra after India's deified hero. He expressed his regret that his son had a name with religious associations and wished that the boy had been called instead Electricity, for that was 'the true God—the material means of wealth and power'. As Dr. Nicol Macnicol observes, this may appear ridiculous but it bears startling witness to the spirit which is abroad among the educated people. N. Macnicol, *India in the Dark Wood* (1930), p. 16.

many of the younger generation. Economic questions loom large and are becoming an absorbing interest; there is not the same insistence on the supremacy of spiritual values. Indian women, whose conservatism, piety, and devoutness are almost proverbial, are beginning to say that they are tired of the worn-out theme of Radha and Krishna and are anxious to grapple with social and economic problems. European admiration of the more mystical and philosophical side of Hinduism is not always reciprocated. India, it has been said, is tired of sentimental Anglo-Saxon lectures on Yoga, oriental philosophy, transcendental aesthetic, and pious foreign exhortations to be Indian at all costs.<sup>1</sup> The last piece of advice is in any case regarded as gratuitous and unnecessary.

The Muslims are in many ways a people apart. They reject Mr. Gandhi's ideas—Gandhiism, as they dub them—on the ground that they base the development of India on the cultural background of Hinduism and Hindu ideology. Their chief interests are either economic, on account of the low level of prosperity attained by the majority, or political, on account of their position as a minority and the fear of Hindu domination as the day of British rule is waning. From the cultural point of view their leaders, while rejecting what they consider the non-ethical principles of western civilization, are ready to use its knowledge, its science, and its progressive ideas. Their aim is to preserve Islamic culture but to harmonize it as far as possible with that of the West. A practical outcome of this aim has been the foundation of the Osmania University at Hyderabad, which, as stated in the decree of H.E.H. the Nizam approving its inauguration in 1917, is intended to blend harmoniously the knowledge and culture of ancient and modern times and to give an education in which advantage will be taken of all that is best in the ancient and modern systems of physical, intellectual, and spiritual culture. Accordingly, it fosters Islamic culture and at the same time garners the fruits of western learning and science, while the medium of instruction is not English but Urdu, a language which is a bond of union among Indian Muslims. Outside the educational sphere there is a movement for reform which owes much to the example of Turkey. A great impression has been made by the social progress and material advancement of that country since 1924, when it abolished the Caliphate and became a secularist state by the suppression of the *Shariat* or sacred law. To the Indian Muslims that law is part of their religion and they shrink from such a revolutionary measure; but there is a growing feeling that their social system should be reformed by abandoning antiquated ideas and practices, and, so to

<sup>1</sup> W. E. Gladstone Solomon, 'Indian Art and the Bombay Movement', *The English Review*, November 1934, p. 362.



speak, cutting away the dead wood which hinders growth; and the old view that education is ancillary to religion, that its prime purpose is to make good Muslims, has no longer the same force.

In the religious sphere there is a modernist movement designed to bring Islam in India into line with western ethical and social principles and to show that it is capable of adjustment to modern conditions. The change consists, as Dr. Murray Titus points out, not so much of a new system of thought as of a new attitude of mind conditioned by modern scientific, social, and economic influences.<sup>1</sup> There is, among the more highly educated at least, a school of thinkers who seek to interpret Islam by the spirit rather than the letter of the law and who believe that it should be rationalized in keeping with the discoveries of modern science and with modern social requirements. They endeavour to bring it into conformity with western standards of thought and in some respects with Christian principles. Some writers indeed have gone so far as to assert that, except for the conception of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, there is no fundamental antithesis between Christianity and Islam. On the other hand, the only new sect of importance, that of the Ahmadiyas, is opposed to revolutionary interpretations of Islam. Its founder, refusing to adapt Islamic doctrines and practices to modern western ideas, opposed the abolition of purdah and polygamy. It is propagandist and anti-Christian in tendency, as may be seen from the remark of one of its exponents that the great object of the promised Messiah, who has come in the person of its founder, is to establish the supremacy of Islam and to break the Cross, i.e. overthrow the religion of the Cross, and that the prophecy of the advent of Dajjal, the arch-deceiver, has been fulfilled by the spread of Christian missionaries who propagate the false doctrine of the divinity and atonement of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> In its polemical attacks it makes use of the higher criticism of the West. In its propaganda it employs western methods, publishing journals with English titles such as the *Review of Religions* and the *Ahmadiya Gazette*.

Both among Hindus and Muslims there is a substantial body of opinion in favour of a synthesis between East and West. There are many, deeply imbued with Indian culture, who retain their allegiance to old Indian ideas and are at the same time anxious to adopt or adapt the highest meanings of modern western culture. They do not harp on the materialism of the West, but retain their admiration for the liberal thought brought through western channels and for its ideals of freedom, action, and progress. A striking expression of this feeling is contained in Rabindranath

<sup>1</sup> *Indian Islam* (1930), p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Ali, *Ahmad, the Promised Messiah* (Lahore, 1906), pp. 23, 26.

Tagore's *Nationalism*, in which he pointed out that it was a weakness to be blind to the glories of the West. Europe had a strength which was not merely the strength of the brute or the machine but the strength of the spirit. Although there was a Europe that was mean and grasping, there was also a Europe of goodness and true greatness, a Europe in whose heart ran the purest stream of human love, of love of justice, of the spirit of self-sacrifice for higher ideals. 'I must not hesitate to acknowledge where Europe is great, for great she is without doubt. We cannot help loving her with all our heart and paying her the best tribute of our admiration.'<sup>1</sup>

Rabindranath Tagore thus recognizes the strength of western culture though he is opposed to an imitation of it at the cost of a sacrifice of Indian ideals. He condemns the misuse rather than the use of machinery and pays tribute to the science which devises it. He and many others seek for a *via media* in which there will be a collaboration of East and West, each giving its best and taking the best which the other can offer. India should retain her characteristic values, but be invigorated by the currents of western thought. She too has a mission to fulfil and with her spiritual wealth does not confront the West with empty hands. Rabindranath Tagore himself has given concrete form to his ideas. He founded in 1901 an institution, called the Santiniketan, which is designed to give expression to the old Indian ideals of education, without, however, being hostile to the spirit of western progress, and preserve old literary and aesthetic traditions, and so hand on the torch of Indian culture. To this he added in 1921 an institution called the Viswabharati, of which the objects are the study of eastern civilization, the promotion of a mutual understanding of East and West by the interchange of ideas, and the cultivation of the common ideals of humanity. Its motto may be translated 'where the whole world meets', and it is, in fact, intended to be a meeting-place for strangers who come to study India and Indians anxious to learn about the West.

The Great War and the subsequent history of Europe have done much to shake belief in the civilization of the West, and the view has gained ground that it is not the pattern on which India should mould itself except for purposes of industrial organization and economic progress. So far as culture is concerned there is increasing insistence on the fact that India must develop on Indian lines and must be original and creative. The machinery of the West may be adopted but India must have free play for her own genius. She has a spirit and life of her own which should enable her to make a contribution to world culture. There is a real sense of pride in and love of India, of which an outcome is a deter-

<sup>1</sup> *Nationalism* (1917), p. 65.



mination that nothing shall be said or done which is likely to discredit or reflect adversely on her and so lower the national prestige.

There is a kind of national *amour propre* which finds expression in many different ways, some great, others small, some healthy and others of doubtful value. It leads to movements of social reform and it stimulates progress. But it also results in a somewhat narrow national egotism. Some nations are so assured of their position and so confident of their greatness that they do not object to exposures of their foibles or weaknesses or even derive a mild amusement from them. Like Oliver Cromwell, they are ready to have a true portrait painted, warts and all. Not so the ardent Indian nationalist, who is often inordinately touchy about his country, resenting outside criticism and taking exception to commentaries on the darker side of Indian life. Films which present Indian characters in an unfavourable light are banned or parts of them cut out. Pictures of backward races shown on the screen at lectures are objected to because of the fear that they may be taken as typical representatives of the Indian people. Protests have been made against India taking part in the Olympic games on the ground that a repetition of past defeats would be a national humiliation. There is often extreme sensitiveness about blots in the history of India, and a desire to reconstruct it so as to show that its past was beyond cavil or criticism. Attempts have been made to show that the Black Hole of Calcutta was not an historical fact but a malicious invention. A resolution was passed by the Legislative Assembly of the United Provinces a few years ago that the government should appoint a committee of experts to revise the text-books on Indian history by eliminating passages calculated to impress on Indian youths that India was inferior to any other nation or nations, though a higher note was struck in the recommendation that the committee should also exclude passages likely to cause communal friction and should remodel the books with a view to infusing a spirit of toleration, brotherhood, and patriotism.

Indians themselves are impressed by the extent to which Indian life has been leavened by western influences. Mr. Gokhale, in a paper read to the Universal Races Congress in 1911, declared that, whereas the contact of the West with other countries had been only external, in India the West had, so to say, entered into the very bone and marrow of the East. In his presidential address to the Indian National Congress of 1897, Sir Sankaran Nair observed that the minds of Indians were subject to English influences from their boyhood and that they became permeated with English ideas. The great English writers were their classics; English history was taught in their schools; the books they generally read were English books describing the forms of English life and

familiarizing them with English types of character; week after week, English newspapers, journals, and magazines poured into India for Indian readers. 'We, in fact, now live the life of the English. Even the English we write shows not only their turns of thought, but also their forms of feeling and thinking.'<sup>1</sup> This description of Indian society applies to the select few rather than to the many. There is a cultured class whose members are practically bi-lingual, being as familiar with English as with their mother tongue. Some prefer to express their ideas in the former language; a gifted few who lisp in numbers find that the numbers come in English. There are men who are so saturated by English thought, so wedded to it spiritually and emotionally, that they turn to it in order to give voice to their most poignant emotions; thus, the poet Madhu Sudhan Dutt, hearing of his wife's death when he himself was on his death-bed, repeated the passage beginning:

Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day . . .

The great majority even of the English-educated classes, however, have not been Anglicized but remain fundamentally Indian in their manner of life and mental outlook. The masses have not even a tincture of western culture. It is outside the cycle of their lives and has no part in the scheme of things as they understand it.

India has been well described as a country which is still marching in uneven stages through all the centuries from the fifth to the twentieth. Its culture is neither uniform nor evenly distributed. Throughout the ages it seems never to have penetrated the lower strata of society, though some of the greatest writers were men of low estate, including a humble shopkeeper, a small tailor, a weaver, and at least one untouchable. At the present day, in spite of all the progress which has been made, western culture has spread only to a section of the population. Knowledge of English is confined to one per cent. of the population, and is mainly a feature of urban life, found chiefly in those cities and towns which are centres of political, commercial, and cultural life. Three-tenths of those who can read and write English are found in three dozen cities having 100,000 inhabitants or more; in these cities they represent one-tenth of the population.

The India of the villages is far less affected by western influences, though it is by no means unaffected. The rural population is subject to outside economic forces; an impression has been made on its industrial life by the mechanical power, the technical developments, and the manufactured articles imported from the West; it is beginning to learn the rudiments of a western political system;

<sup>1</sup> J. K. Majumdar, *Indian Speeches and Documents on British Rule, 1821-1918* (1937), p. 153.



the motor-bus is bringing villages into touch with the towns and the wireless with the outside world. But otherwise the West seems to have done little to change the traditional conception and conduct of rural life. Though intellectual development has been fostered by a network of schools, only a part of the population avails itself of the education which they give, and this is mostly elementary and does not include a knowledge of English. This generalization, like most things that can be written about India, is subject to exceptions. In eastern Bengal secondary schools teaching English have long been common in the villages, where the cultivating classes are alive to the value of an English education as a passport to government service and professional employment. In the Punjab nine *per mille* of the population go to the university, which is a proportion little less than that in Great Britain (twelve *per mille*); in one large village Sir Malcolm Darling found that there were thirty-five young men who had matriculated and four who had graduated.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, there are provinces which have few secondary schools except in the towns, and recent inquiries have shown that 80 per cent. of the students of the Osmania University at Hyderabad have never spent a single night in a village.<sup>2</sup>

The India of the forest and hill tribes is still a world apart, in which more or less primitive conditions prevail, though these are changing in consequence of roads and railways, the reservation of forests, the establishment of coal-mines, lime-works, tea and coffee plantations, &c., the emigration of able-bodied labourers to industrial and urban centres, and the immigration of traders and agriculturists. As is pointed out in Chapter XII, it was noticed by Mr. Thurston in 1909 that primitive tribes which only a few years before were living in a wild state, buried away in the depths of the jungle, had come under the domesticating and sometimes detrimental influence of contact with Europeans with a resulting modification of their conditions of life, morality, and even language.<sup>3</sup> More highly developed tribes have been still more affected by the elements introduced by an advancing civilization, such as a modern system of government and contact with the staff necessary to implement it, the magistrates in the law courts, the doctors in dispensaries, and the engineers who maintain roads and other public works, as well as with non-officials like teachers in schools and missionaries who seek their conversion. But the representatives of an outside culture in any given area are few in number. Taking the tribes as a whole the cultural and economic development has not been great, and there can be no comparison between them and the more civilized communities of India.

<sup>1</sup> *Rusticus loquitur* (1930), p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Asiatic Review* (1938), p. 756.

<sup>3</sup> E. T. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (1909), p. xv.

From the point of view then of culture there may be said to be three Indias, the India of the cities and towns, the India of the villages, and the India of the tribes, between which there are strong contrasts which have been accentuated by western influences. There are, too, strong contrasts within them. We find, for example, in Chota Nagpur a home of peoples whose manner of life is still mainly aboriginal, but it also contains modern coal-mines and the great industrial city of Jamshedpur with modern processes of iron and steel production. In the province of Bihar the belief in witchcraft led to the commission of nine murders in one quarter of the year 1937. In the same year a procession of slow-moving bullock-carts, flying red flags with the device of the hammer and sickle and laden with memorials on the subject of agrarian grievances, wound its way through the streets of the capital to the house of the Prime Minister—a curious combination of ancient and modern which may be paralleled by the sounding during one month of the year of an electric siren at Conjeevaram for the benefit of pious Hindus who wish to get up at 3 a.m. to offer worship. To mention some personal experiences, a few miles outside a town which was lit by electricity I have found firesticks by the roadside and, incongruously enough, empty cigarette packets littering the ground. In another town I have listened to a lecture in which Mrs. Annie Besant delighted an Indian audience with her treatment of metaphysical subjects, and in a near-by village have heard of a wolf-child and further away have learned of guardian spirits being sold to protect the crops, enclosed in sealed bamboo tubes just as the jinn in the *Arabian Nights* was immured in a brass bottle.

Real culture implies thorough digestion and assimilation of knowledge, and among the classes which have come into contact with western culture there are many talented and highly cultivated men and women who have absorbed it and who have attained an advanced standard. Far more, however, have not, and seem only half-educated, their minds being filled with a jumble of ill-assorted learning and crude ideas due to a superficial acquaintance with a certain number of books. Many appear not to grow up to full intellectual stature but to reach a certain stage of mental growth and then to stand still. Intellectual adolescents, they acquire a little learning and not much real knowledge. No doubt this is largely due to the fact that English education is often more an intellectual exercise than an education in the true sense. Those who receive it are apt to look on instruction as a means to an end, the passing of examinations, and not to be interested in the education itself. Much is undoubtedly due to the natural difficulty of learning through the medium of a foreign language. The powers of memory tend to be cultivated more than the critical faculties.



Subjects are memorized without being fully understood. Theories and ideas are accepted without being subjected to critical examination and balanced judgement. And there is often knowledge of some subjects and complete ignorance of others.<sup>1</sup>

In many cases there is a curious kind of mental maladjustment. There may be an intellectual conversion to western doctrines without the springs of emotion being touched—intellectual belief without a foundation of faith, mere mental assent which has no practical effect on the conduct of life. It is not uncommon too to find an infinite capacity for believing what sentiment dictates against the cold light of reason. Incompatible ideas are held simultaneously without any apparent consciousness of their antinomy. Some seem to keep superstitious beliefs and scientific convictions in different mental compartments and are not troubled by their being irreconcilable. A learned astronomer, for example, who was known for the accuracy of his predictions of eclipses, confessed that in his heart he still entertained the popular belief that an eclipse of the moon is caused by a demon swallowing it up. A science master who taught that eclipses were due to the shadow of the earth has been known to perform the ceremonies necessary to prevent the moon disappearing in the dragon's maw and to have pleaded in justification: 'I believe with my intellect what I teach the boys, but with my spirit I believe in the dragon.' A Bachelor of Law, who was an assessor in a case in which an ignorant peasant was proved to have killed a woman in the belief that she was a witch, held that she should be acquitted of the charge of murder because he himself was convinced that the woman really was a witch.

It is no easy task for an Indian to assimilate a culture which has no roots in the soil and no connexion with immemorial religious and social sanctions. For a full appreciation of a foreign culture a certain detachment from inherited traditions is necessary, and such detachment is hard of attainment owing to the force of environment and the tenacious hold of tradition and social conventions. Some succeed in harmonizing the two cultures, and can say, like Keshab Chandra Sen, that one half of their heart is in sympathy with Europe and the other half with Asia. Such men seem to feel that the two are not incompatible and to find vitalizing force in the dynamic energy and ideals of action and progress

<sup>1</sup> A member of the Madras Public Services Commission recently mentioned a number of howlers coming not from schoolboys but from graduates and 'double graduates' as proof of the meagre knowledge possessed by many candidates for posts in the public services. The following show extraordinary ignorance of even India itself: 'Lucknow is the capital of Calcutta', 'The Premier of Madras is Lord Chamberlain', 'The Andamans are islands where people who commit suicide are sent.'

presented by the West and something satisfying in the passive virtues and quietism of Indian thought. The one is like a tonic, the other acts as an anodyne. In other cases there is a divided and conflicting life due to the distracting influence of two ideals of life and conduct; there is not merely a difference of perspective but a fundamental conflict of ideas, by which the intellectual centre of gravity is disturbed. The inward strife of warring elements produces mental tension and unrest which may be almost paralyzing.

Many are like reeds shaken by winds blowing from the West and by winds blowing from the East. On the one side there are the outlook and standards of values learnt from the West. On the other there is the pull of India and of inherited traditions which cannot be eradicated. The higher spiritual concepts of India still appeal with a compelling force to men who have given up the observances of orthodox Hinduism, and they strike a response which is not deadened by rationalism. There is a *nostalgie spirituelle* which it is hard to describe. Perhaps the best way of giving an idea of it is to quote an account which Pratap Chandra Mazumdar, a leader of the Brahmo Samaj, gave (in a letter published in the *Theistic Quarterly Review* in 1879) of his reactions to the personality and teaching of Ramakrishna Parahansa.

'What is there common between him and me? I, a Europeanized, civilized, self-centred, semi-sceptical, so-called educated reasoner, and he, a poor, illiterate, shrunken, unpolished, diseased, half-idolatrous friendless Hindu devotee? I, who have listened to Disraeli and Fawcett, Stanley and Max Müller, and a whole host of European scholars and divines; I, who am an ardent disciple and follower of Christ, a friend and admirer of liberal-minded missionaries and preachers, a devoted adherent and worker of the rationalistic Brahmo Samaj—why should I be spell-bound to hear him?'

Owing to the coexistence of the conflicting ideas and standards of the two cultures and the constant tug-of-war between them, some become what the French call *déracinés*. They themselves are conscious that they have become a compound of East and West, a mixture of elements which they cannot bring into a harmonious whole. A striking example of the psychological effect produced by these rival loyalties is the confession of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, that do what he will, he cannot get rid either of the habits of mind which he acquired at school and college in England or of his inherited Indian ideas.

'I have become a queer mixture of East and West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere. Perhaps my thoughts and approach to life are more akin to what is called western than eastern, but India clings to me, as she clings to all her children, in innumerable ways; and behind



me lie, somewhere in the unconscious, racial memories of a hundred, or whatever the number may be, generations of Brahmans. I cannot get rid of either that past inheritance or my recent acquisitions. They are both part of me.<sup>1</sup>

Many are forced by their family and social relations to lead a kind of double life, an intellectual life dominated by western ideas, and a family life governed by the conventions of the Hindu social system. Like Gibbon's philosophers of antiquity, they assert the independent dignity of reason but resign their actions to the commands of law and custom. There is often a complete divorce between the social life and the life of ideas, and also between the private life and the public life. Theories are not put into practice and many a man puts away his European ideas, with his European dress, when he crosses the threshold of his home.

'We go one way', wrote Pratap Chandra Mazumdar, 'our old relatives another, and our women yet another; and notwithstanding all these conflicting forces, the Indian home remains pretty much in the same condition as it occupied before the government opened its schools and colleges. Our educated young men discuss their projects of reform in debating clubs; but as soon as they get home, they carefully put their progressive ideas in their pockets and bend their necks beneath the yoke of custom as their ancestors before them. They belong to the nineteenth century, but their homes to the first century.'<sup>2</sup>

This account applies to the old conservative families, and since it was written there has been a change, as the old class of orthodox fathers has been to a great extent replaced by one which has had much the same education and which has the same kind of interests as the younger generation. Greater freedom in the expression of thought is consequently countenanced, but freedom of practice is still prevented in most Hindu households by the constraints of caste and custom. There is a consequent repression of personality by a multitude of inhibitions which are regarded as irrational and are resented accordingly. The effect it may have on sensitive temperaments is apparent from the remarks of a Bengali, who said: 'While our mind is highly imaginative and our intellect peculiarly subtle, our actual social life is wholly circumscribed by conventional custom and completely fettered by artificial rules. This divorce of our actual life from the life of our ideas has made us a race of neurasthenics.'<sup>3</sup> This is too strong and sweeping a statement to be accepted as generally applicable, but it is sufficient to indicate the state of nervous strain which may exist in individual cases.

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography* (1936), pp. 419, 597.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*, J. Richter, *History of Indian Missions* (1908), p. 376.

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.*, *Report of the Calcutta University Commission* (Calcutta, 1919),

Women have been chiefly responsible for the maintenance of the traditional régime in family life. Comparatively few are educated to the same level as men, and their outlook is necessarily more restricted, especially where the purdah system prevails. They are fundamentally conservative and the homes of which they are the leading spirits are accordingly governed by customary conventions. However progressive a man may be, he is loath to disturb domestic harmony by enforcing his ideas. Consequently, to quote a remark made by an Indian lady at the All-India Women's Conference held at Travancore in 1938, on account of the ignorance of mothers and the uncongenial atmosphere of the home, education is like Penelope's cloak, woven in the daytime at school and undone at night in the home.

There is an intellectual disparity of the sexes due to an age-old prejudice against female learning, which is reflected in a saying: 'Educate a woman, and you put a knife in the hands of a monkey.' Happily, this prejudice is no longer so active or so general, and there has been a wide extension of female education. In Bombay in particular, it is said that the time when the education of girls had no supporters and only open enemies has passed away and the welcome stage of positive approval and encouragement has been reached.<sup>1</sup> The movement, however, affects the classes more than the masses, and the cities and towns more than the villages, and the rural populace has shown little disposition to take part in it.

There has been an even stronger prejudice against English education for women. It is suspect on the ground that it deprives women of the domesticity which is their proper function and generally makes them immodest and unwomanly. Popular sentiment is embodied in the remark made by a character in some popular tales that its accomplishments are fit only for courtesans and 'shameless white women', and in the words of an old Bengali lady: 'What good does school education do? It only turns our girls into *mems*.'<sup>2</sup> The last word is the same as *memsahib*, and its implications are the reverse of complimentary. English education has therefore been predominantly male education. Young men who have received an English education are anxious to have wives who can share their views and their interests, and sensible parents endeavour to comply with their wishes, but the supply of such brides is as yet unequal to the demand. The majority therefore have to marry girls who have received little more than an elementary education and with whom they have little in common. Marriage moreover generally takes place at an early age, and female education ends at marriage, unless, as is sometimes the case, young

<sup>1</sup> *Bombay Quinquennial Report on Education, 1922-7*, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> G. S. Dutt, *A Woman of India* (1929), p. 106.



husbands take the trouble to teach their wives English. The intellectual inequality of the sexes is a problem which exercises the minds of thoughtful Indians. As the Raja of Nabha remarked, 'We educate our sons, teach them English and western ideas, and then marry them to girls who have had no education. The result will be a breed of mules.'<sup>1</sup>

As regards the general position of women there have been extraordinary changes. Their political enfranchisement; their greater social freedom, as seen in a widespread abandonment of purdah by the more cultured classes; their emergence into public life and the adoption of professional careers; the rapid growth of the women's movement; the improvement of their legal status by such measures as the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, passed by British India in 1937, and an earlier and more far-reaching measure, the Hindu Law Women's Rights Regulation passed by the Mysore legislature in 1933—all are momentous changes having their origin in a reorientation of thought as to the position of women as free and responsible agents in opposition to the traditional view that they should be kept in lifelong tutelage and subjection.<sup>2</sup> The modernists take their stand partly on the western conception of women's rights and partly on the principle of nationalism, holding that the advance of women and a consequent readjustment of social life are necessary if India is to attain full nationhood. According to an Indian proverb a cart cannot run on one wheel, and India cannot progress while half of it is in ignorance and subjection. On the other hand, the movement is abhorrent to the more conservative and reactionary elements, who apprehend that the establishment of a new order will cause the loosening of social ties and destroy the tested criteria of conduct.

Old India has not been reconciled to the changes which have already taken place, and the new woman has still to tread delicately with her old-fashioned sisters. In the words used by Madame Halidé Edib in *Inside India*, 'she has to dance with one foot to slow and with the other to quick music'. Except in advanced circles she has to contend with prejudice and has to live down a somewhat sinister reputation. An illuminating sketch of the light in which the new Indian woman is viewed in the villages is given by Mr. G. S. Dutt in *A Woman of India*. He describes his wife's first visit to his family, which lived in a village remote from western influences, and the anxiety which his relatives felt about her coming because she was a modern educated woman and all such were

<sup>1</sup> Sir W. Lawrence, *The India we served* (1928), p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> In the case of Hindus this has scriptural authority, the Laws of Manu enjoining that a woman must never seek independence but be dependent as a child on her father, as a wife on her husband, as a widow on her sons, or if she has none, on the near kinsmen of her husband.

regarded with strong disapproval. 'Not only European women but all the modern educated Indian women were in the eyes of the villager so many *mems*.' He explains that European women in popular estimation are mere drones who idle the day away riding, dancing, reading novels, and doing no housework. They do not nurse or look after their children but leave them to the care of ayahs. They show no proper respect to elder women. Their habits are objectionable, for they neither rinse their mouths nor wash their hands after a meal. The educated Indian woman is believed to be tarred with the same brush. She too wears shoes and stockings, does nothing but read novels, and despises household work as being beneath her dignity. Mr. Dutt goes on to describe the delight of the ladies of his family when they found that his wife was not spoilt by her education, but conformed to Indian ideas of dress and etiquette, could cook as well as they could, and had a charm and simplicity which could not possibly be expected in a *mem*. As a result their whole attitude towards the education of their girls was changed, and the way was paved to a girls' school being opened in the village.

Among the literati western culture has established a certain community of intellect. Educated Indians have been brought into closer communion among themselves, and there is closer communion between educated India and the West; the cultured Indian finds himself at home in scholarly circles whether at home or abroad. But there is a widening rift between them and the unlettered proletariat. The higher intellectuals have outstripped their countrymen in general progress and have a learning and range of thought which set them apart from the ignorant and superstitious masses. There has always been a cultural cleavage between the two classes, particularly perhaps under the Mughal rule in North India, where Persian became the language of culture and the Urdu in common use was so persianized that it was as foreign to the common people as Norman French was to the English peasantry. The cleavage, however, was not so great under an oriental system of education, with a limited range of more or less stereotyped subjects, as it is under a system which teaches western science and philosophy and sets up western standards of thought and action. The intellectual training which it gives is profoundly different from that of previous ages, and by producing different interests, sympathies, and habits, and, generally, a different form and conception of life, it has accentuated the difference between the cultured minority and the illiterate majority. Indians themselves are conscious of the difference between the two classes and have no doubts as to its cause. A report issued by an educational committee of the Mualim League Council in 1939 sets forth that



English, having been made the medium of instruction in all the higher branches of learning, has created a permanent gulf between the highly educated few and the educated many. Not only, it is said, has it prevented knowledge from percolating into the masses, but the excessive importance given to English has cast upon the educated classes 'a burden which has maimed them for life and has made them strangers to their own land'. So too an Indian lady writes:

'Our political life, our social life, our literary life, has got the impress of the West till we cannot call our soul our own. What are the results? Caste distinctions are, and were, bad enough, but the artificial distinctions created by western education are still worse. English has failed to be the mother tongue of the millions with the result that people are divided from people, a man is divided from his own wife and mother.'

Such divisions are perhaps more marked in rural than in urban life. The values taught in schools and colleges differ widely from the traditional values accepted in the villages, from which many students come, so that the young man who has received an English education often becomes out of touch with his social environment. 'I feel an utter stranger. The people look on me as an intruder,' said a young Punjabi when he first began to resume his village life after completing his studies at college.<sup>2</sup>

Thought among the more highly educated has been revolutionized by the discoveries of science, which has substituted the concept of a world governed by the regular operation of natural law for that of spasmodic and unpredictable supernatural intervention. In the field of science, especially pure science, there has been an extraordinary advance. At the Jubilee session of the Science Congress held in 1937 Sir James Jeans referred to the phenomenal growth of India as a scientific nation. There have been and are Indian scientists, especially mathematicians and physicists, of international fame. The late Ramanujan was a genius who made remarkable discoveries in pure mathematics; Sir C. Venkata Raman, after whom the Raman spectra are named, was awarded the Nobel prize for physics in 1930; the late Sir Jagadis Chandra Bose, the author of *Life Movements in Plants* and *Nervous Mechanism in Plants* was made a Fellow of the Royal Society for scientific as distinct from mathematical achievements; the way to new fields of astronomical knowledge has been opened by the researches of men like Saha, Chandra Sekhar, and Kothari. The Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science at Calcutta is a centre of physical research with more than an Indian reputation; the Indian Academy of Sciences at Bangalore, founded by Sir C. V. Raman, has within

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Hansa Mehta in *Women in Modern India* (Bombay, 1929), pp. 100-1.

<sup>2</sup> M. L. Darling, *Rusticus loquitur* (1930), p. 10.

a few years won a place among scientific institutions. There seems to be a special aptitude for mathematics and pure science, but applied science is also cultivated and valuable research work is carried out in various institutions such as the Institute of Textile Chemistry and Chemical Engineering at Bombay, the Forest Research Institute at Dehra Dun, the laboratory of the Tata iron and steel works at Jamshedpur, and a number of institutes for agricultural research, e.g. a cotton technological laboratory at Bombay, a jute technological laboratory at Calcutta, botanical laboratories at Agra, Madras, Benares, and an institute of cotton breeding at Indore, an institute of sugar technology at Cawnpore, &c.

On the other hand, the first principles of science are unknown to the masses. So far from having a realization of man's mastery over nature, they are filled with a profound sense of nature's mastery over man. Having little knowledge of natural laws, they ascribe physical phenomena to supernatural causes, and the events of daily life to the influence of benign or malignant deities. As Froude said of the Elizabethan age, their inheritance is an earnest faith in the supernatural, an intensely real conviction of divine and devilish forces governing the world. There has been, to some extent, a change of view during the past century. The calamities of the seasons, blight, drought, and famine, used to be attributed to the anger of the gods or evil spirits at such things as the eating of beef by the British, the increase of adultery due to the leniency of the British system of justice, which did not treat it as a matter of life and death, the prevalence of perjury in the law courts, and the operations of the 'Trigonometrical Survey.' Few now hold or voice such views, although much the same kind of idea seems to underlie Mr. Gandhi's statement that the terrible earthquake which occurred in Bihar in 1934 was a punishment for the sin of untouchability. The causes of some diseases, such as plague and malaria, are moreover more widely understood. On the other hand the goddess of small-pox is still worshipped; convulsions and epilepsy are believed to be due to possession by devils; crop blights are quite commonly attributed to the malign influence of a demon, which has to be propitiated by prayer or sacrifice. A belief in evil spirits haunting men from birth to death is general; a Tamil proverb says that the devil who seizes you in the cradle goes with you to the grave. Peasants are convinced of the power of exorcists to drive out evil spirits and have no doubt of the efficacy of the mumbled hocus-pocus of their conjurations.

<sup>1</sup> See Sir W. Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official* (1893), vol. i, pp. 236, 240, 243-4; vol. ii, pp. 49-50. The camp fires lit at night on the highest tops and the incomprehensible nature of the survey work were believed to be connected with unholy dealings with spirits, and Brahmans were employed to exorcize the peaks the moment the surveyors removed their instruments.



Omens decide whether journeys should be begun and new projects and business undertaken. Belief in the power of charms and amulets, in miracles and magic persists; there is indeed scarcely anything that is too strange to be believed. Riots break out from time to time because it is thought that children are being kidnapped and sacrificed in connexion with some great work such as the building of bridges and docks. In 1930 a trenching ground outside the imperial capital of Delhi became a place of pilgrimage because the gas generated by decomposing night-soil burst into flame and was believed to be a manifestation of some deity; some took away the earth to their homes in the belief that it was impregnated by a divine spirit. In the general election of 1937 there were peasants so ignorant that they put petitions to the gods inside the ballot-boxes, while some made obeisance to them because they thought they enshrined the spirit of Mr. Gandhi.

Astrologers still make a good living and marriages are determined by the horoscopes of prospective brides and bride-grooms. Belief in astrologers' predictions is not uncommon among the better educated. There are speculators on the stock exchange and frequenters of the race-course who follow their pronouncements in buying and selling shares and in making bets. Even astrologers, however, are beginning to feel the effects of the spirit of the age. One expert, who had spent three years acquiring his art at a college in Benares, told Sir Malcolm Darling that nowadays few people wanted to consult him about the times to begin ploughing, sowing, or reaping, and that though there were still ample other opportunities for the exercise of his art, 'the demand for science was so strong that an element of it had to be mixed in with the rest'.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, the ferment of western ideas has been to some extent a disruptive force in religious life. Among those who have been subject to their influence authority has been ousted from its throne. Those who have received an English education are very different from the former generation of those, whether Hindus or Muslims, who were taught according to the perfect manner of the law and had no other standards. Ceasing to be the intellectual disciples of Brahmans and maulvis, many assume a critical attitude and assert the right of independence of judgement and free interpretation. The prescriptions of dogma are subordinated to the dictates of reason, and the belief in old canons is weakened or destroyed. English education, as was pointed out in 1838, was an element which had not entered into the calculations of the Brahmans, who had hitherto had the direction of religious thought, and they had no machinery to oppose it.<sup>2</sup> It caused a revolt against fiats which

<sup>1</sup> *Rusticus loquitur* (1930), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> C. E. Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People in India* (1838), p. 202.

could not be reconciled with reason and against conventions which stood in the way of liberal progress. It was thus a solvent of established belief, but it also assisted in a regeneration of Hinduism, free from formalism. In many cases, however, its effect has been destructive rather than constructive, producing a mood of scepticism or culminating in atheism. This tendency to doubt and negation was observed over a century ago, when it was said that many Hindus, renouncing their own religion and professing themselves free inquirers after truth, were in a state of religious vacuity. It was accentuated with the passage of years and the spread of education. Describing the mental and moral outlook of a later generation P. C. Mazumdar observed, in his life of Keshab Chandra Sen, that young men drifted away yearly in great numbers to every species of radical doubt and that all faith in religion became weaker every day. In 1896 another Indian writer observed that the agnostic tendency of European thought seemed to have a fascination for the Indian intellect and that atheism was spreading. 'The writings of agnostics and atheists are growing in favour with our academic youth, who seem to consider all religion as superstition and every creed as an anachronism. This is the attitude, we fear, of a majority of young India.'<sup>1</sup> To come to more recent times, a similar estimate of the trend of educated thought was given in 1931 by another Indian, the Census Superintendent of Cochin, who observed that to the generality of Hindus who have received an English education religion is a matter of indifference or unconcern, and its rites and practices are looked upon as a mass of superstition to be condemned and derided by all right-thinking people.<sup>2</sup>

A certain number seem to regard atheism or agnosticism as the last word in western culture, infidelity as the label or hall-mark of advanced thought, and religion as an expression of obscurantism. Some declare all religions to be false and are content with a negative creed or mere indifferentism. A certain number, on the other hand, avow that all religions are equally true and profess a shallow syncretism, which may perhaps be exemplified by the case of a student who offered daily prayers to Krishna, Kali, Buddha, Christ, and Socrates. Others, while professing their ancestral faith give it only a tenuous or formal adhesion. Some again apply rationalistic principles, which are anathema to their coreligionists, and seem to live in a borderland between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. These various shades of thought must not, however, be taken as representative of India as a whole. There is a strong body of opinion hostile to intellectual doctrinaires who seem to the great

<sup>1</sup> R. P. Karkaria, *India: Forty Years of Progress and Reform* (1896), pp. 76-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Census of India Report 1931*, vol. i, part i, p. 383.



majority to sap the foundations of faith and society and to nullify virtue. Many of the upper classes are lax in outward observances, but neither belief nor practice has been appreciably changed among the masses. The position of the Brahman, it is true, has been weakened to some extent. In South India the anti-Brahman movement has produced a spirit of anti-clericalism animated by the conviction that the masses are exploited by their priesthood. The ministrations of Brahmans are, however, generally regarded as essential, and orthodoxy has a strong hold. Similarly among Muslims the teaching of mullahs and maulvis steeped in the Koran are followed by the great majority, who regulate their lives by their teaching. The leaders of Hindu thought and practice, as Sir S. Radhakrishnan has pointed out, are for their part convinced that the times require not a surrender of the basic principles of Hinduism but a restatement of them with special reference to the needs of a more complex and mobile social order.<sup>1</sup> A revolt against religion is moreover not reflected in the census statistics, whatever the opinions which may be voiced. At the census of 1931 out of 350 millions of people those who were recorded as having no religion numbered no more than 153, and only 940 were returned under the head of indefinite beliefs, a comprehensive group which included agnostics, atheists, rationalists, and sceptics, besides deists, monotheists, Christian Scientists, and theosophists. These figures are eloquent of the universality of religion in India.

## REACTIONS ON THE WEST

It was remarked by Sir John Seeley that, of all the unparalleled features presented by the English empire in India, none was so unique as the slightness of the machinery by which it was united to England and the slightness of its reaction upon England. The connexion with India had, he pointed out, modified its foreign policy but had produced no change in the English State, although there was at one time some fear of a mischievous reaction owing to the danger of the English character being corrupted and the balance of the constitution upset by adventurers who returned from India loaded with wealth and entered into English political life with ideas formed in Asia.<sup>2</sup> Large fortunes had long been made in India,<sup>3</sup> but it was not till after the battle of Plassey that those who

<sup>1</sup> *The Hindu View of Life* (1927), p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> *The Expansion of England* (1885), pp. 247-9.

<sup>3</sup> Robinson Crusoe remarked in Defoe's *Further Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719): 'I observe that our people in England often admire how the officers which the Company send into India, and the merchants which generally stay there, get such very great estates as they do and sometimes come home worth sixty to seventy and a hundred thousand pounds at a time.'

made them were either numerous or influential. Then, as has been said, England conquered Bengal, but Bengal subdued the morals of its conquerors.<sup>1</sup> Up to 1765 the country was exploited and, according to Clive, the name of the English was made to stink in the nostrils of Hindus and Muslims. Equally certainly the name of the Nabob stank in the nostrils of the British public, and the appellation was a term of reproach.<sup>2</sup> Individually the Nabobs were unpopular; collectively they were regarded as a political as well as a moral danger, because they took advantage of the prevailing parliamentary corruption to outbid the landed aristocracy for seats in the House of Commons and to compete for political influence. Horace Walpole noticed in 1761 that Nabobs, as well as West Indians, conquerors, and victorious admirals, attacked every borough. Chatham in 1770 declared:

'For some years past there has been an influx of wealth into the country which has been attended with many fatal consequences because it has not been the regular, natural product of labour and industry. The riches of Asia have been poured in upon us and have brought with them not only Asiatic luxury but, I fear, Asiatic principles of government. Without connexions, without any natural interest in the soil, the importers of foreign gold have forced their way into Parliament by such a torrent of private corruption as no private hereditary fortune can resist.'

In these last words we have the gravamen of the charge against the Nabobs. They had no connexion with the old governing class, i.e. the aristocracy and the landed interest which formed an agrarian oligarchy. Their wealth forced up the price of seats; they were upstarts, *nouveaux riches*, who had no right to enter the circle of privilege and power. Somewhat different ground was taken by William Pitt in 1782, when one of the reasons which he advanced in support of his motion for parliamentary reform was that foreign princes purchased seats in the House of Commons, which were held by their nominees. 'We have sitting among us the members of the Rajah of Tanjore and the Nawab of Arcot . . . our senators are no longer the representatives of British virtue but of the vices and pollutions of the East.' Actually the wealth and political power of the Nabobs seem to have been exaggerated. Dr. Holzman has shown that the number of members of Parliament connected with India did not exceed thirty;<sup>3</sup> and though enormous fortunes were certainly made in the first decade after the battle of Plassey, the days when the pagoda tree could be shaken, and its golden fruit

<sup>1</sup> J. C. Marshman, *The Story of Carey, Marshman, and Ward* (1864), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> The title of a book by one H. F. Thompson, published in 1780, speaks for itself: *The Intrigues of a Nabob, or Bengal the Fittest Soil for the Growth of Lust, Injustice, and Dishonesty*.

<sup>3</sup> *The Nabobs in England* (New York, 1926).



picked up, quickly passed away. Still, the fear that the springs of public virtue might become still more polluted undoubtedly existed, as may be seen from a cartoon, which the caricaturist Gillray published in 1788, showing the King, the Queen, and dignitaries of the Church and State scrambling for rupees.

The danger, if it existed, was averted. A Civil Service was formed and abuses prevented. Warren Hastings, who himself saved barely enough to buy back Daylesford, testified in 1785 to the disdain of sordid emolument which had become general. As the result of thirty years' experience the Abbé Dubois wrote in 1822 of the uprightness of the British rulers. Jacquemont found seven years later that there were no vulgar Nabobs; they were characters which no longer existed except in the plays performed in London theatres. Enormous salaries were paid, but there were no longer huge fortunes to be made.<sup>1</sup> Macaulay told the House of Commons in 1833 that he rejoiced that his countrymen, who seventy years earlier had returned to England laden with wealth and infamy, now came back to their native land with no more than an honest competence, and he viewed with delight the honourable poverty which was the evidence of a rectitude firmly maintained amidst strong temptations.

Adam Smith's judgement on the early administration of the British territories by the East India Company was that there never was a government so indifferent to the welfare of its subjects. The conscience of the British public was aroused, however, by the tales of abuses which had been committed and the rumours of others which had not but which obtained equal credence. A sense of national responsibility for the government of a dependent people was aroused, and it was resolved that the poor Indian should be as fully protected against injustice and oppression as the Englishman. Rancorous and prejudiced though its promoters were, Warren Hastings's impeachment was a tribute to the new spirit which was abroad and the new ideas of the way dependencies should be governed. It became an established principle that the government should be conducive to the happiness and welfare of the subject race as well as to the national advantage of the ruling race. 'The mission of England was to be one of obligation and not solely of profit. India was not to be retained merely as a source of wealth and power for its rulers. Its well-being was to be secured as well as the interests of Great Britain, a political axiom which was expressed in John Bright's remark, 'You may govern India, if you like, for the good of England, but the good of England must come through the channel of the good of India.'

The concept of trusteeship, the idea that the governing race

<sup>1</sup> C. A. Phillips, *Letters from India, 1829-1833* (1936), pp. 70, 72.

should regard itself as standing in the relation of a trustee for the interests of the governed, and should exercise its power for the benefit of the latter, was first given authoritative expression in the report of the parliamentary committee of 1833, which set forth that it was recognized as an indisputable principle that the interests of the native subjects in India were to be consulted in preference to those of Europeans whenever the two came in competition—a statement which marked an extraordinary advance on the conception of mere dominion hitherto held in Europe and put the question of the government of a subject race on another plane. It is true that the principle thus affirmed was not always adhered to. There were occasions when the financial and commercial interests of Great Britain and India being at variance, those of India went to the wall. But a tradition of obligation towards the subject race was created, and this was developed into a policy of education and tutelage, of which the basic principle was that the subject race was of imperfect political capacity and should be given scope for self-expression and trained in the art of government little by little, before it could be given complete political franchise.

As is well known, the idea of trusteeship has been applied to less civilized peoples in other parts of the British Empire; thus, a White Book published in 1923 declared that the principle of trusteeship in Kenya was unassailable and proceeded to define trusteeship in the statement that the interests of the African natives must be paramount, and that if and when those interests and those of the immigrant races should conflict, the former should prevail<sup>1</sup>—words which seem like an echo of the language used about India in 1833. It is not suggested that the principle of trusteeship would not have been a determinant of policy even if there had been no Indian empire, but the fact remains that it was first enunciated for India as a result of the British connexion with that country and that it was first put into practice there. It has also not been without effect in determining the relations of other western nations to backward peoples in their colonial possessions; and it was ultimately given general recognition in the mandatory system set up by the League of Nations. It has been even subscribed to by, or at any rate received lip service from, Nazi Germany, which maintains that it has a right to the return of its former colonies not merely on the strength of inalienable right (whatever that may mean) and of economic need, but also on what is called the ethical principle that it has the same right as other nations to share in the education of backward peoples.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 1922, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Instructions issued by the training section of the Colonial Political Department of Germany. *The Times* of 25 January 1939.



The languages, learning, and lore of India, its religion and philosophy, its social institutions and usages, soon attracted the attention of continental as well as of British scholars. It was realized with surprise that there was a culture which had its origin outside Greece, Rome, and Judaea. Scholars and others were amazed at the richness and extent of Sanskrit literature, the discovery of which created in learned circles an impression almost like that of the rediscovery of the treasures of classical Greek literature at the time of the Renaissance. This impression was greater in Germany and France than in England; it is a common subject of comment by Indians that the number of scholars who have studied their literature and philosophy is greater in the two former countries than in the latter. Nowhere did they receive greater attention than in Germany, which built on the foundations laid by three English scholars, Sir William Jones, who translated the Laws of Manu and the Sanskrit drama *Sakuntala*; Sir Charles Wilkins, the translator of the *Bhagavad-gita* and the *Hitopadesa*, and Henry Thomas Colebrooke, who has been adjudged by Max Müller to be the founder of Sanskrit scholarship in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

The wisdom found in Sanskrit works was greeted with something like reverential awe. Thus the French philosopher Victor Cousin, speaking of the poetical and philosophical movements of the East, and above all, those of India, which were, he said, beginning to spread in Europe, declared that they contained so many truths, and such profound truths, that he was constrained to bend the knee before the genius of the East and to see in that cradle of the human race the native land of the highest philosophy. Some of the cultured classes were filled with a passion for the knowledge of the East, particularly of what Heine called the immense flowering forests of old Indian poetry. It was this spirit which impelled Baron Bunsen in 1813 to express his longing to bring into his own knowledge and into his own fatherland 'the language and spirit of the solemn and distant East', and to say that, for the accomplishment of that object, he would even quit Europe in order to draw out of the ancient well what he could not find elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

Friedrich von Schlegel published in 1808 *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians), in which he asserted the intellectual affinity of Europe and Asia; his brother, August Wilhelm von Schlegel, founded the *Indische Bibliothek* in 1820 and produced a translation of the *Ramayana* in 1829-31. Rosen published a specimen of the hymns of the *Rig Veda* in 1830 and brought out the first book of that great work

<sup>1</sup> *Biographical Essays* (1884), p. 264.

<sup>2</sup> Max Müller, *Biographical Essays* (1884), p. 318.

(in Sanskrit and Latin) eight years later. In 1836-9 Rückert wrote *Weisheit der Brahmanen* (The Wisdom of the Brahmans), which some regard as one of the most beautiful poems in the German language. According to Heine, Friedrich von Schlegel did for Germany what Sir William Jones had done for England, and not only introduced the study of Sanskrit there but also set it on a firm footing. Heine himself, after reading A. W. Schlegel's translation, declared that he felt at home in Valmiki's jungle of song and that the heroic sufferings of the godlike Rama touched his heart like a familiar tale of woe. On the other hand Goethe, though attracted by Persia and Arabia, expressed the strongest repulsion towards India, disliking its 'bizarre complexity and bewildering anomalies'.<sup>1</sup> The Vedanta philosophy made a deep impression on Schopenhauer, who, as stated in Chapter XV, remarked that in the whole world there was no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads, that it had been the solace of his life, and would be the solace of his death.<sup>2</sup>

The study of Sanskrit and the discovery of the affinities between it and the European languages led to the development of the science of comparative philology, of which the founder was Franz Bopp (1791-1867). The discovery of the relationship between languages ultimately derived from Sanskrit, which were all called Aryan, led to the formulation of a new theory of race. This postulated the existence of an Aryan race, different branches of which were believed to have migrated on the one side into India and on the other side into Europe. It is a theory which has been shown by ethnologists to be fallacious; but the importance of the influence which it, or rather its perversion into a racial doctrine as scientifically ridiculous as it is morally abominable, has had on Germany in recent years can scarcely be exaggerated. Dr. Alfred Rosenberg in *Mythus des Zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts* declares that the first great wave of Nordic blood flooded the high mountains of India and that the Aryans there, keeping separate from the non-Aryans, created a conception of the world deeper and loftier than any other philosophy up to the present day; and he propounds a vile and vicious basis of law in what he calls an old Indian proverb of the Nordic period, to the effect that 'Right is what Aryan men consider to be right'. New cultural standards are set up by Adolf Hitler, who says in *Mein Kampf* that human culture and civilization are inseparably bound up with the existence of the Aryan, and that all we can see to-day in the way of human culture, the achievements of art,

<sup>1</sup> Heine's *Travel Pictures and The Romantic School*, translated by F. Storr (1895), pp. 126, 238, 344.

<sup>2</sup> Max Müller also said: 'If these words of Schopenhauer's required any endorsement, I should willingly give it as the result of my own experience during a long life devoted to the study of many philosophies and many religions.'



science, and technique, is almost exclusively the creative product of the Aryan, who alone is the founder of a higher humanity. The theory of Aryanism propounded by Hitler has appealed to the narrow race-consciousness of the German and has had deplorable effects on what Hitler in the same work calls 'the stupid flock of German sheep'. Intellectual circles in India are amazed by the theory of blood and race accepted by Nazi Germany and horrified by its results.

Comparative philology was not the only new branch of knowledge which Europe owed to contact with India. The study of the ancient code of Hindu law and of existing social institutions, such as the village community, led to the comparative study of early law and customs, of which the chief exponent was Sir Henry Maine. Both the science of comparative mythology, which had been founded in 1849 by Adalbert Kuhn with his work *Die Herabkunft des Feuers*, and the comparative study of religions were carried farther, especially by Max Müller, who was their pioneer so far as Great Britain was concerned. Ethnology was enriched by the new light thrown on it by the inquiries concerning Indian castes and tribes made by a number of scholars occupying administrative posts in India. These, however, are specialist studies, which are caviare to the general.

The literary reactions have been more diffused, and often somewhat superficial in character. India has been more often a source of poetic imagery than an active influence. In the early years of the nineteenth century both Southey and Moore turned to it for themes, the one making use of Indian mythology in *The Curse of Kehama* and the other producing a mixture of romance and pageantry in *Lalla Rookh*. Both have had admirers; no poem of the time was more translated into foreign languages than *Lalla Rookh*. But both are somewhat artificial and show little knowledge of the spirit of India; Moore shut himself up with a library of books on the East in order to get his material and atmosphere. At the present day most people would agree with Taine's description of these poems as being decorative pictures drawn with ideas coming from the head and not the heart, and would echo his sentiment that he prefers to see the East in orientals from the East, in Vyasa and Firdausi rather than in Southey and Moore.<sup>1</sup>

There have been writers who have sought to interpret India to the West and whose approach has been sympathetic, as, for instance, Sir William Hunter, who wrote, 'I do love these Indian races so much and I do so long to obtain a hearing for India in Europe.' W. B. Yeats again said that he always sought to bring his mind close to the minds of Indian and Japanese poets, old

<sup>1</sup> *History of English Literature* (1892), vol. iii, p. 429.

women in Connaught, and mediums in Soho. Others have been impressed by the difference between eastern and western life and ideals, by the changelessness of India, as of the East in general, and by its passivity, which is contrasted with the constructive activity and creative energy of the West—ideas which have been familiarized by Matthew Arnold in his description of 'the brooding East bowing low beneath the blast in patient deep disdain' and by Rudyard Kipling in 'East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet', though the corollary about two strong men meeting is usually forgotten. The essential difference between India and Europe is also the theme of Meredith Townsend's book *Asia and Europe*, which stresses the mental seclusion of India and the contempt of India for Europe—the titles of two of its chapters.

Others have given western readers the impression of a land of mystery and colour, Rajas and jewels, and generally of glamour. Others again have treated it merely as a background for the Anglo-Indian and have familiarized the British public with various types, of which Jos Sedley and Colonel Newcome are early examples. To many India is merely the India of Rudyard Kipling, who has thrown a halo of romance round the work of English empire-builders, such as the administrator bearing the heat and burden of the day, the police officer skilled in disguises, the railway engineer, the bridge-builder, and the soldier on the frontier, who is the warden of the marches and deals with fierce tribesmen as one strong man with another. But Kipling's India is also the India of *Kim* and *The Jungle Book* with their pictures of the country-side and forest life, and many of his poems show a real understanding of and sympathy for the people of the land, such as the humble peasant, that 'much-administered man' whose life is 'a question between a crop and a crop' and on whom 'an empire's strength is laid'; the child-wife who 'dies with the babble in her ear of mid-wife's muttered charms'; and the widow, drudge of all her father's house, whose bread is sorrow, and whose drink is tears.

Unfortunately there have been all too few Indian writers who have attempted to interpret India to the West, which is dependent for its ideas about India on the fictional and other works of European writers, newspaper articles, and the impressions derived from the talk of a few persons who have been there. The works of Rabindranath Tagore, however, have had extensive circulation and commanded widespread admiration in the West, though his influence appears to have waned since the publication of his collection of poems entitled *Gitanjali*. The latter caused a sensation when it first appeared and led to the award to Tagore of the Nobel prize for literature; the English version ran to several editions before the first Bengali edition was sold out. This and other works of



Tagore have been translated into many languages; Professor Lesny of Czechoslovakia has recently borne witness to their influence in his own country, telling us that Tagore's view that death should be welcomed as the mother of a new life was a consolation to Czech soldiers during the Great War, and that the sale of his works rose with every departure of troops to the front.<sup>1</sup>

There are pantheistic conceptions in western literature which are akin to those of Hinduism, but philosophers and poets in different hemispheres often follow parallel paths and similarity is not a proof of origin. There is, however, a good deal of study of the Hindu philosophy of religion. Sir S. Radhakrishnan tells us that in the course of his travels in the West he has learnt that there are thousands of men and women who dimly understand that the principles of a true religion and a just social order are to be found in the principles of the Hindu religion.<sup>2</sup>

The personalities and teaching of a few Indian religious leaders have from time to time impressed religious opinion in the West. According to Max Müller, when Keshab Chandra Sen visited England in 1870, his eloquent addresses produced a deep impression in the widest spheres, and his name became almost a household word.<sup>3</sup> Martineau observed that he showed Christian England that the essence of Christianity lay, not in the doctrinal and historical machinery of the churches but in the spirituality of which that machinery was merely the vehicle. Such impressions are apt to be fleeting, but the visit of Swami Vivekananda to the United States of America towards the end of the nineteenth century had a more lasting result, for the Ramakrishna Mission which he founded has adherents in that country. There is a branch of it at San Francisco, and a shrine at the Indian headquarters, at Belur near Calcutta, has been built with the contributions of American sympathizers. The Mission has another branch in London.

The cult of Yoga has some vogue, especially in the United States. In the last few years a number of books on the subject have been published, and in France a film has been prepared for exhibition, which records the Yoga postures and gives X-ray studies of the reactions of the internal organs to them. This, it is said, is to be the first of a series of films intended to interpret Indian culture to the West. In Europe there are many who find themselves at home in the spiritual atmosphere of Sufi mysticism. A Sufi movement was started in the West by an Indian Muslim, Inayat Khan, in 1910 and has grown without courting publicity.

<sup>1</sup> V. Lesny, *Rabindranath Tagore* (1939), p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> *The Legacy of India* (1937), p. 286.

<sup>3</sup> *Biographical Essays* (1884), p. 72.

It has an international head-quarters at Geneva, has held an annual summer school at Suresnes near Paris since 1922, and produces a quarterly magazine, *The Suft*, which is written in English but published in Holland. Other Indian bodies have helped to familiarize the West with the basic principles of Islam and have gained some European converts. A Muslim mission was founded at Woking in 1913 by Khwaja Kamal-ud-din, the Imam of the mosque at that place; the Ahmadiyas have branches in England, France, Holland, Germany, Hungary, and the United States.

The effect of Indian on western music has been slight. The charm of the East was felt by French operatic composers, such as Gounod, Saint-Saëns, Massenet, and Bizet, who turned to it both for colour and for themes; but its influence was connected with the East in general rather than with India in particular. The scenes of Delibes's work *Lakmé*, produced in 1886, however, were laid in India and the theme was the conflict of passion and the call of honour and duty, as seen in the tragic love of an English army officer and an Indian girl dedicated to a deity. Indian music has made little or no appeal to Europeans, who are bewildered and confused by the varieties and subtleties of rhythms and melodies which Indians love. Its instruments are different; its notation is strange and seems incomprehensible. Music which to an Indian ear is perfectly harmonious strikes a European ear as discordant and wanting in symphony. Indian dancing appears to suit European taste better. It is taught by a few teachers in Paris, and in London ballets have been staged in which the dancing was based on Indian dance movements with the accompaniment of music composed from Indian rhythms and melodies.

Nor have Indian painting and sculpture appealed to western taste except in a small and select circle of artists and connoisseurs.<sup>1</sup> They have for long centuries been associated with religion, sculpture almost entirely, painting to a less extent. In Europe also art long looked to religion for inspiration and subject-matter, but it has not been so hidebound by tradition as that of India. The latter clung to an old technique and form. Painting was an 'art of line', the Indian painter expressing form through a convention—'the convention of pure line', in the manipulation and quality of which he has been adjudged supreme.<sup>2</sup> The different canons and conventions of Indian art, the symbolism which is its special characteristic, and the absence of the naturalism which characterizes western art, are understood by few in the western world, where realists do not appreciate the fact that the repre-

<sup>1</sup> The India Society in London was founded in 1910 in order to promote a better understanding of Indian culture, especially as represented in the arts.

<sup>2</sup> P. Brown, *Indian Painting* (1927), p. 7.



sentation of nature is not the aim of Indian art and that the latter desires to express a spiritual meaning underlying sensuous appearance. Ruskin, as Mr. Rawlinson points out, while admitting that Indian art was delicate and refined, condemned it because, he said, it never represented a natural fact, but was opposed to the facts and forms of nature. Others have also had a certain antipathy to Indian art. Roger Fry confessed in *Last Lectures* that he had found the general aspect of almost all Indian art intensely and acutely distasteful, but added that the need to clarify and express his feelings with regard to it very much modified his attitude. The man in the street less qualified to criticize, being incapable of discerning the inner meaning of outward forms, summarily dismisses Indian art as grotesque. The same charge cannot be levelled against decorative art, for the subtle design of which Ruskin expressed his appreciation, going so far as to say that in their delicate application of divided hue and fine arrangement of design Indians were inimitable. This branch of Indian art has been accepted by the West, which has copied it freely as, for instance, in the designs of early Brussels carpets and in the Paisley shawls, the latter being imitations of those made in Kashmir.

Indian architecture has been admired at a distance. The most notable attempt at its transplantation is the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, built by George IV when Prince of Wales. This somewhat grotesque imitation of the Indo-Saracenic style seemed perfect to him, but fantastic to Hazlitt, who described it as a collection of stone pumpkins and pepper-boxes, giving the impression that the genius of architecture had at once the dropsy and the megrims.

An Indian writer has pointed out that in England there is little awareness of India as a cultural entity. With improved means of communication the time lag between India and the outside world has gradually been diminished; but there has been no corresponding increase in the understanding of India. Traces of the effects of British rule will, he considers, last in India long after she attains independence, but he questions whether, a hundred years after the last British soldier has left the shores of India, one will find in the habits of the English people any traces of their conquest and domination of India.

'For one cannot help feeling that, whatever economic benefits England may have derived from her long occupation of India, culturally she has drawn what may, for all practical purposes, be regarded as a blank. And economic benefits, for all their impressive solidity, are, in the ultimate analysis, quite as evanescent as the baseless fabric of Prospero's dream.'

The substantial justice of this judgement must be admitted.

<sup>1</sup> Iqbal Singh, 'The Rediscovery of India', *The Spectator*, 13 August 1937.

During the present century, it is true, the West has shown increasing appreciation of the cultural heritage of India. There is wider recognition of the truth expressed in Robert Bridges's lines:

China and Ind, Hellas or France—  
Each hath its own inheritance;  
And each to Truth's rich market brings  
Its own divine imaginings.

The influence of Indian thought is growing. The publication of such a work as Paul Cohen-Portheim's *Asien als Erzieher* in 1920 (published in English in 1934 under the title *The Message of India*) is significant of the appeal which it makes to many thinkers in the West. In spite, however, of all this it would seem that the reactions of India on the West have, on the whole, been comparatively slight, except in the spheres of government and economics. Even in Great Britain, the country most closely connected with it, life and thought have been little affected. India is remote; few Indians come to Great Britain; the number of those born in Great Britain who go to India and return to Great Britain is relatively minute, and their influence on social habits is seen mainly in such minor manners as the introduction of polo<sup>1</sup> and certain forms of dress and food, e.g. khaki, pyjamas, jodhpurs, mulligatawny soup, chutney, and curry.

The government of India is, however, one of the greatest problems of British statesmanship, and the economic influence of India is considerable owing to commercial intercourse and the modern interconnexion of the whole world. The trade of Great Britain and consequently its economic condition depend largely on the import of raw materials from, and the export of manufactured articles to, other countries, of which India is one of the most important. For over a century India, with its teeming millions, has been one of England's best customers; at one time 90 per cent. of its cotton fabrics came from Lancashire. The prosperity of India has contributed to the prosperity of England, which until recently has had little to fear from its industrial competition; but as the population of India increases, without apparently a corresponding increase in the productive capacity of the land, it tends to consume more of its food products. At the same time India is becoming more of an industrial country and supplying its needs

<sup>1</sup> A form of polo was indigenous in Manipur on the north-east frontier and in Balti, Gilgit, and Chitral on the north-west, where it was learnt by British officers, who brought it to India proper in the sixties and seventies of the nineteenth century. The game appears to have been played for the first time in Great Britain in 1871, and next year was referred to in the *Illustrated London News* as a game invented by British officers in India. See H. Yule and A. C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson* (1903), p. 720.



from its own resources to an increasing extent. It is already entering into competition with Great Britain in some branches of industry, and as British goods are undersold by Indian products, the latter country is beginning to realize that the products of British labour are adversely affected by cheap Indian labour. On the other hand, to quote the closing words of the report of the Indian Fiscal Commission, 'manufacturers stand to gain by the increased prosperity of India far more than they stand to lose by the development of Indian industries. . . . A more prosperous India will mean a more prosperous Britain.'

## CONCLUSION

Although the influence of modern India on the West has been comparatively slight, western civilization has made a deep impression on the life of India, political, social, religious, economic and cultural. It is hard to distinguish the permanent content of that civilization from temporary forms, but throughout the greater part of the world it may be said to connote three things, the Christian ethic, the rule of law, and the conquest of nature by science. The first has been introduced into India by the diffusion of Christian thought and a system of government embodying Christian principles. The rule of law, which is itself infused by the Christian ethic, has been established, and India has learnt that the weak have rights as well as the strong, that arbitrary force must give way to even justice, and that government is bound by law as much as the private citizen. Law has become the basis of civilization to an extent to which there is no parallel in the previous history of India. The triumphs of science, as seen in the products of invention, such as the printing-press, the steamship, the railway engine, the telegraph, and the aeroplane, have broken down its isolation and brought it into closer contact with the western world. At the same time they have brought together different parts of India which were remote both in distance and in ideas. The unification of the country has been assisted by the spirit of nationalism which has been engendered by the pressure of an alien government and by the inflow of ideas of western origin. The political concepts of the West have transformed the constitution of British India. Personal autocratic rule of the old Indian type survives in the States, but even there it is beginning to be modified and the seeds of representative government have been sown. The remark of an Indian Maharaja, quoted in a previous chapter, that democracy was an occidental idea incomprehensible to a Hindu, and that so long as there were Hindus in India it could not be implanted there, repre-

sented popular opinion seventy years ago, but this is no longer the common view. Even ultra-modern theories of socialism and communism are current in advanced circles and are being propagated among the peasantry and industrial workers. In religion dogma has been challenged by reason, and authority has been shaken by the exercise of independent judgement. Various movements of reform have been started, both in response to and in reaction against the subversive doctrines of the West. At the same time rationalism has produced a spirit of religious indifference or complete agnosticism among many who are in touch with western thought. Social life has also been affected. The joint-family, which was formerly the unit of Hindu society, shows signs of decay. The same can scarcely be said of the caste system, but many of the educated classes refuse to submit to its restrictions, so that it has no longer either the same universality or the same rigidity, while the movement for the uplift of the untouchables—a movement which even fifty years ago would have been unthinkable except in Christian circles—is a challenge to its canons. Perhaps even more momentous is the women's movement, which promises in time to revolutionize the position of women. Already the purdah system has been largely, though by no means wholly, given up in the upper strata of society. Women have been given electoral rights and a new conception of woman as a responsible being, who has duties as well as rights extending beyond the family circle, has been created.

India is stirring to new ideas and waking to new issues, but its ways of life and thought have been only partially transformed. It has a civilization of its own which refuses to be extinguished by a culture which is fundamentally alien to its ideas. The efforts of those who believe that their country should be energized by the dynamic of the West are opposed by those who are convinced of the superiority of Indian culture. The old order still endures, the traditional régime is still observed. Caste continues to be the cement of Hindu society; its rules regulate the lives of the great majority from birth to death. Hinduism as a religion is centred, as in past ages, on the Brahman and involves obedience to doctrines of which he is the interpreter and observance of rites of which he is the minister. In law the personal law of Muslims and Hindus is followed as well as the criminal and civil law imported by the British. In the economic sphere age-old processes of production coexist with modern industrial processes of western origin. There are still village servants whose status is determined by custom, and whose services are rendered to the village as a whole and are not a matter of contract with individuals. The industrial unit is still the handicraftsman working individually, though there is also a large



body of labour in mills, mines, and factories organized on modern lines and using up-to-date machinery.

The States have been far less affected by Western influences than British India. As has been pointed out by an authority with personal knowledge of them, they still stand almost everywhere upon the ancient ways; purdah is more strict; life conforms more closely to the joint-family ideal of Hindu law; caste restrictions are stronger; the village as an economic and social unit is still intact. And yet there are astonishing innovations; in Gondal, for instance, female education has been made compulsory.<sup>1</sup> In both British India and the States the village is still the home, and the cultivation of the land the sole occupation, of the great majority of the population, though there are manufacturing centres exhibiting many of the features of western industrialism. English education has however widened the outlook and changed in a large measure the standards of those who have received it. New tastes have been created; there is increasing appreciation of the appurtenances of western civilization; even villagers enjoy the use of electric light and power, a ride in a motor-omnibus, and a visit to the cinema, where these are available. But culturally, the life of the villager is scarcely affected by western influences. To quote an account of village life in South India which is instinct with sympathy and understanding:

'The patient cultivator has still left to him the worship at the village altar or in the sacred temple. He can still drone to himself his treasured ethical stanzas, which form his rule of life from the day he picked them up in the village school or from the wandering minstrel. The gods are very near to him, and he hears with pride how his piety and faith can bring him very close to the side of Siva or Vishnu, gracious gods, loved of old. He listens in the eventide beneath the village tree to the bard who recites from learned books and explains in the simple vernacular past traditions of the strife and struggle of heroes and saints and of the long-strained devotion and chastity of the heroines of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. He looks forward with joy to the days of festival when the village will be gay with streaming flags as the gods are carried forth from the temples amid the songs of minstrels telling of a salvation for all men from the toils of life and from rebirth.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sir W. Barton, *The Princes of India* (1934), pp. 45-6, 111.

<sup>2</sup> R. W. Fraser, *Indian Thought Past and Present* (1915), pp. 194-5.





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